

REMARKS  
ON THE  
SLAVERY QUESTION,

IN A LETTER  
TO JONATHAN PHILLIPS, ESQ.

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By WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

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## LETTER.

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MY DEAR SIR,

ON reading Mr. Clay's speech on Slavery, many thoughts were suggested to me which I wished to communicate ; and our conversation of last evening confirmed me in the purpose of laying them before the public. I have resolved to give my views in the form of a letter, because I can do my work more easily and rapidly in this way than in any other. A general, methodical discussion of the subject would be more agreeable to me ; but we must do what we can. I must write in haste, or not at all. If others would take the subject in hand, I should gladly be silent. Something ought to be spoken on the occasion ; but who will speak ? My range of topics will be somewhat large, nor, if good can be done, shall I hesitate to stray beyond the document which first suggested this communication.

I shall often be obliged to introduce the name of Mr. Clay ; but, as you will see, I regard him in this discussion, simply as the representative of a body of men, simply as having given wide circulation to a set of opinions. I have nothing to do with his motives. It is common to ascribe the efforts of politicians to selfish aims. But why mix up the man with the cause ? In general, we do well to let an opponent's motives alone. We are seldom just to them. Our own motives on such occasions, are often worse than those we assail. Besides, our business is with the arguments, not the character, of an adversary. A speech is not refuted

by imputations, true or false, on the speaker. There is indeed a general presumption against a politician's purity of purpose ; but public men differ in character as much as private ; and when a statesman holds an honorable place in his class, and brings high gifts to a discussion, he ought to be listened to with impartiality and respect. For one, I desire that slavery should be defended by the ablest men among its upholders. In the long run, truth is aided by nothing so much as by opposition, and by the opposition of those who can give the full strength of the argument on the side of error. In an age of authority and spiritual bondage, the opinions of an individual are often important, sometimes decisive. One voice may determine the judgment of a country. But in an age of free discussion, little is to be feared from great names, on whatever side arrayed. When I hear a man complaining, that some cause, which he has at heart, will be put back for years by a speech or a book, I suspect that his attachment to it is a prejudice, that he has no consciousness of standing on a rock. The more discussion the better, if passion and personality be eschewed ; and discussion, even if stormy, often winnows truth from error, a good never to be expected in an uninquiring age.

I have said, that my concern is wholly with Mr. Clay's speech, not with the author ; and I would add, that in the greater part of the discussion which is to follow, my concern will be with slavery and not with the slaveholder. Principles, not men, are what I wish to examine and judge. For the sake of truth and good temper, personalities are to be shunned as far as they may. I shall speak strongly of slavery, for we serve neither truth nor virtue by pruning discourse into tameness ; but a criminal institution does not necessarily imply any singular criminality in those who uphold it. An institution, the growth of barbarous times, transmitted from distant ages, and "sanctified" by the



laws, is a very different thing, as far as the character of its friends is concerned, from what it would be, were it deliberately adopted at the present day. I must indeed ascribe much culpableness to the body of slaveholders, just as I see much to blame in political parties ; but do I therefore set down all the members of these classes as unprincipled men ? The injustice, criminality, inhumanity of a practice we can judge. The guilt of our neighbour we can never weigh with exactness ; and in most cases must refer him to a higher tribunal. This I say, that I may separate the subject from personalities. To me, the slaveholder is very much an abstraction. The word as here used expresses a general relation. The individual seldom or never enters my thoughts.

The principal part of Mr. Clay's speech is an attack on the Abolitionists. These I have no thought of defending. They must fight their own battle. I am not of them, and nothing would induce me to become responsible for their movements. And this I say from no desire to shift from myself an unpopular name. It will be seen in the course of these remarks, that I am not studying to soothe prejudice or to make a compromise with error. I separate myself from the Abolitionists from no sensitiveness to reproach. A man, who has studied Christianity and history as long as you and myself, will not be very anxious to shelter himself from what has been the common lot of the friends of truth. However the Abolitionists may have erred, I honor them as advocates of the principles of freedom, justice, and humanity, and for having clung to these amidst threats, perils, and violence. In declining all connexion with them, I am influenced by no desire to make over to others all the censures and invectives of the community ; but I simply wish to take my true position, to appear what I am.

Mr. Clay's speech, however intended for the Abolitionists, contains passages at which every man interested in the removal of slavery must take offence ; and to these my remarks will be confined. The most important part of it, indeed, has no special bearing on the Abolitionists, but concerns equally all the free States. I refer to that, in which we are told, that slavery is to be perpetual, that we have nothing to hope in this respect from the South. Every other part of the speech sinks into insignificance in comparison with this. Coming from any other man, this document would be less important. But Mr. Clay is no rash talker. His legislative course has been distinguished by nothing so much as by his skill in compromising discordant opinions. His speech was meant to be a compromise, to exert a healing power. He does not, in a fit of transient, blinding anger, dash to the ground our hopes of relief from the intolerable evils of slavery. He states deliberately the grand obstacle to emancipation, and it is one which can only be removed by the dying out of the slaves. He takes the ground, that if the two races are to live together, one must be hopelessly subjugated to the other, so as to prevent collision. Emancipation, he gives us to understand, would be a signal for civil war, to end only in extermination. And as this peril, if real, increases with the increase of the servile class, of consequence every year's continuance of the evil, makes freedom, if possible, more and more impossible. We lament and abhor this doctrine, but are truly glad that it is brought out distinctly, that the free States may know what they are to expect. A vague hope has floated before many minds, that this immense evil was in some way or other to cease. On this ground, such of us in the free States as have written against slavery, have been rebuked. Our friends as well as foes have said, "Be quiet ; Let the South alone ; it

will find for itself the way of emancipation. You throw back the good work a century." We have all along known better. We have known that long use, the love of property, and the love of power, had bound this evil on the South, with a triple adamant chain. We have known, that the increasing culture of cotton was spreading slavery with immense rapidity through new regions, and, by rendering it more gainful, was strengthening the obstinacy with which it is grasped by the owner. We have known, that in consequence of this culture, the northern slave States, whose soil the system had exhausted, have acquired a new interest in it, by humbling themselves to the condition of slave-breeding and slave-trading communities. We have seen, that the institution, if to be shaken or subverted, was to be stormed from abroad, not by "carnal weapons," not by physical force, but by those moral influences, which, if steadily poured in upon a civilized people, must gradually prevail. It is now seen, that we were right. It is now plain, that the South has deliberately wedded itself to slavery. We are glad to have it known. The speech publishing this doctrine was meant to be a herald of peace, but it is in truth a summons to new conflict. It calls those who regard slavery as a grievous outrage on human nature, to spread their convictions with unremitting energy. I take the ground, that no communities, unless cutting themselves off from the civilized world, can withstand just, enlightened, earnest opinion; and this power must be brought to bear on slavery more zealously than ever.

I observe, in passing, that Mr. Clay, in giving us no hope for the extinction of slavery but in the extinction of the colored race, puts an end to all expectation of aid in this respect from the Colonization Society, an institution of which he is an ardent friend, and, for aught I know, is now the President; and I trust his frankness will open the eyes of those, who dream of removing slav-

ery by the process of draining it off to another country ; a process about as reasonable as that of draining the Atlantic. Colonization may do good in Africa. It does only harm among ourselves. It has confirmed the prejudice, to which slavery owes much of its strength, that the colored man cannot live and prosper as a freeman on these shores. It indeed sends out to the public now and then accounts of planters, who have freed a greater or less number of slaves to be shipped to Africa. But these very operations strengthen slavery at home. Could the master send his plantation to Africa with his slaves, he would serve the cause of freedom. But the land remains here, and remains to be tilled ; and by whom must the cultivation go on ? by slaves. Of course new slaves must be bought. Of course the demand for slaves is increased ; and the price of a man rises ; and a new motive is given to the slave-breeding States to stock the market with human cattle. Thus the barbarous trade in men strikes deeper root. No. Colonization darkens the prospects of humanity at home, however it may brighten them abroad. It has done much to harden the slaveholder in his purpose of holding fast his victim, and thus increases the necessity of more earnest remonstrance against slavery.

Mr. Clay of course will not allow, that the resolution of making slavery perpetual at the South, is a reason for new assaults on the system. He insists, on the contrary, with the whole South, that we, in this region, have nothing to do with the matter ; that it is no concern of ours ; and that to labor here for the subversion of an institution in other States, is a criminal interference. Interference is the word which has been applied to all agitation of this subject at the North ; and the censure implied in the term has misled the unthinking into a vague notion, that to touch the subject here is doing wrong to the South.

But I maintain, that there is a moral interference with our fellow-creatures at home and abroad, not only to be asserted as a right, but binding as a duty. This is the first topic of discussion, and its importance will induce me to treat it at large.

We are told, that the slaveholding States, in relation to this point, stand on the same ground with foreign countries, and are consequently to be treated with equal delicacy and reserve. This position I deny ; but grant it ; I maintain the right of acting on foreign countries by moral means for moral ends. Suppose that there were in contact with us a foreign state, which should ordain by law, that every child, born with black hair or a darkly-shaded face, should be put to death ; and suppose that every sixth child should be slaughtered by this barbarous decree. Or take the case of a community at our door, which should restore the old gladiatorial shows, and suppose that a large part of the population should perish in these execrable games. Who of us would feel himself bound to hold his peace, because these atrocities were committed beyond our boundaries ? Who would say, that the tortures of the slain were no concern of ours, because not of our own parish or country ? Is humanity a local feeling ? Does sympathy stop at a frontier ? Does the heart shrink and harden as it approximates an imaginary line on the earth's surface ? Is moral indignation moved only by crimes perpetrated under our own eyes ? Has duty no work to do beyond our native land ? Does a man cease to be a brother by living in another state ? Is liberty nothing to us, if cloven down at a little distance ? Christianity teaches different lessons. Its spirit is unconfined love. One of its grandest truths is human brotherhood. Under its impulses, Christians send the preacher of the cross to distant countries, to war with deep-rooted institutions. The spiritual ties, which bind all men together,



were not woven by human policy, nor can statesmen sunder them.

Suppose that one of the States of the Union should become pledged by its institutions to intemperance, that its laws should be framed to encourage the production and consumption of ardent spirits. Would not every other State be bound to give utterance to its detestation of this horrible system? Suppose that temperance societies, in their anxiety to purify this sink of corruption, should make its excesses and crimes their standing themes. Who of us would recognise the right of the intemperate State to repel this interference as an assault on its sovereignty? What should we think, were this community to insist, that it would not suffer its character to be traduced, or the product, on which its wealth and revenues depended, to be diminished, and that it would recede from the Union unless permitted to manufacture and drink alcohol unreprieved? These questions answer themselves. But I shall undoubtedly be asked, whether intemperance and slavery be parallel cases. They are parallel as viewed in relation to my object, which is, not to weigh the guilt of different crimes, but to establish a general principle, to establish the right and duty of men to oppose the force of moral reprobation to prevalent moral evils, whether in our own or other countries. In regard to the comparative guilt of intemperance and slavery, I will only say, that the last involves the worst evil of the first; that is, it does much to degrade men into brutes. There is, however, this difference; the intemperate man degrades himself; the slaveholder degrades his fellow-creatures. Which of the two is most culpable in the sight of God, let every man judge.

The position is false, that nation has no right to interfere morally with nation. Every community is responsible to other communities for its laws, habits, character; not re-

sponsible in the sense of being liable to physical punishment and force, but in the sense of just exposure to reprobation and scorn; and this moral control communities are bound to exercise over each other, and must exercise over each other, and exercise it more and more in proportion to the spread of intelligence and civilization. The world is governed much more by opinion than by laws. It is not the judgment of courts, but the moral judgment of individuals and masses of men, which is the chief wall of defence round property and life. With the progress of society, this power of opinion is taking the place of arms. Rulers are more and more anxious to stand acquitted before their peers and the human race. National honor, once in the keeping of the soldier, is understood more and more to rest on the character of nations. In this state of the world, all attempts of the slaveholder to put to silence the condemning voice of men, whether far or near, are vain.

I claim the right of pleading the cause of the oppressed, whether he suffer in this country or another. I utterly deny, that a people can screen themselves behind their nationality from the moral judgment of the world. Because they form themselves into a state, and forbid within their bounds a single voice to rise in behalf of the injured; because they crush the weak under the forms of law, do they hereby put a seal on the lips of foreigners? Do they disarm the moral sentiment of other states? Is this among the rights of sovereignty, that a people, however criminal, shall stand unproved?

In consequence of the increasing intercourse and intelligence of modern times, there is now erected in the civilized world, a grand moral tribunal, before which all communities stand, and must be judged. As yet, its authority is feeble compared with what it is to be, but still strong enough to lay restraint, to inspire fear. Before this, slaveholding communities are arraigned, and must answer. The

friends of justice, liberty, and humanity, accuse them of grievous wrongs. It is vain to talk of the prescription of two hundred years. Within this space of time, great changes have taken place in the code, by which the commonwealth of nations passes sentence. The doctrine of human rights has been expounded. The right of the laborer to wages, the right of every innocent man to his own person, the right of all to equality before the laws, these are no longer abstractions of speculative visionaries, no longer innovations, but the established rights of humanity. Before the tribunal of the civilized world, and the higher tribunal of Christianity and of God, the slaveholder has to answer for stripping his brother of these recognised privileges and immunities of a man. Multitudes, on both sides of the ocean, looking above the distinction of nations, standing on the broad ground of a common nature, protest in the face of heaven and earth against the wrong inflicted on their enslaved brother. Let the South understand, that it is not your voice, or mine, or that of a small knot of enthusiasts, which they have to silence. You and I are nothing, but as we represent those great principles of justice and charity, with which the human heart is everywhere beginning to beat. Everywhere the slaveholder is accused; everywhere he is judged.

It is strange, that the South should tell us, that the increasing protest at the North against slavery, is the greater wrong, because slavery is one of their *institutions*. As if an evil lost its deformity, by becoming an institution, that is, an established thing, held up by laws and public force. One would think, that the circumstance of its being so rooted, of its having gained this fearful strength, were the very reason for vigorous opposition. A few straggling individuals, given to a bad course, might be overlooked for their insignificance. But when a community, openly, by statutes, by arms, adopts and upholds an enormous wrong,

then good men, through the earth, are bound to unite against it, in stern, solemn remonstrance. The greater the force combined to support an evil, the greater the force needed for its subversion. Crime is comparatively weak, until it embodies and "sanctifies" itself in institutions. Individuals, seizing on and enslaving their brethren, would be put down by the spontaneous, immediate reprobation of society. It is the perpetration of this wrong by communities, which makes it formidable ; and, I confess, that here, if anywhere, a justification may be found for organized associations against slavery. This evil rests on associated strength, on the prostitution of the powers of the state. Regarded as an institution, which combined millions uphold, it seems to have a strength, a permanence, against which individual power can avail nothing ; and hence, it may be said, strength is to be sought in associations. The argument does not satisfy me ; for I believe, that, to produce moral changes of judgment and feeling, the individual, in the long run, is stronger than combinations ; but I do feel, that slavery, entrenched behind institutions, is, on that very account, to be assailed with all the weapons of reason, of moral suasion, of moral reprobation, which good men can wield. Less mercy should be shown it, because it is an institution.

The notion, which I have combated, that slavery is to be treated with respect because it is a public ordinance, is one of many proofs, that, even yet, there is but a faint consciousness of the existence of an everlasting and immutable rule of right. Multitudes, even now, know no higher authority than human government. They think, that a number of men, perhaps little honored as individuals for intelligence and virtue, are yet competent, when collected into a legislature, to create right and wrong. The most immoral institutions thus gain a sanctity from law. To the laws we are indeed bound to submit, in the sense of ab-

staining from physical resistance ; but we are under no obligation to bow to them our moral judgment, our free thoughts, our free speech. What ? Is conscience to stoop from its supremacy, and to become an echo of the human magistrate ? Is the law, written by God's finger on the heart, placed at the mercy of interested statesmen ? Is it not one of the chief marks of social progress, that men are coming to recognise immutable principles, to understand the independence of truth and duty on human will, on the sovereignty of the state, whether lodged in one or many hands ?

You and I, Sir, observe the golden rule, concerning Southern slavery. We do to our neighbour, what we wish our neighbour to do to us. We expose, as we can, the crimes and cruelties of other States, and we ask of other States the same freedom towards our own. If, in the opinion of the civilized world, or of any portion of it, we of this Commonwealth are robbing men of their dearest rights, and treading them in the dust, let the wrong be proclaimed far and wide. If good men anywhere believe, that here the weak are at the mercy of the strong, and the poor are denied the protection of the laws, then let them make every State of the Union ring with indignant rebuke. Especially if a giant evil is here incorporated with our civil institutions, upheld by the public force, so that the sufferers are made dumb, so that they endure the last wrong in being forbidden to speak of their wrongs, then, we say, let humanity beyond our borders take hold of their cause. If the oppressed are muzzled here, let the lips of the free elsewhere give voice to their wrongs.

In the preceding remarks, I have gone on the supposition, that the slaveholding States, as far as slavery is concerned, stand to the other States on the footing of foreign countries, and have shown, that if we make them this concession, our right of remonstrance against this institution is



untouched. But this concession is ungrounded, unjust. The free and slave States are one nation, and have a very different connexion with one another from their connexion with foreign communities. Slavery is not the affair of a part only, but of the whole. The free States are concerned in it, and of necessity act on it and are acted on by it. We of the North sustain intimate relations to slavery, which make us partakers of its guilt, and which, of course, bind us to use every lawful means for its subversion. This I shall attempt to establish.

If we look first at the District of Columbia, we have a proof, how deeply the free States are implicated by their contact with the slaveholding. I do not refer now to the reproach fixed on the whole people, by the open, allowed existence of bondage at the seat of government. This is evil enough, especially if we add, that the District of Columbia, besides this contamination, is one of the chief slave-markets in the country; so that strangers, foreign ministers, men whose reports of us determine our rank in the civilized world, associate with us the enormities of the slave-trade and of slave auctions as among our chief distinctions. This is bad enough for a community which has any respect for character. But there is a greater evil. The District of Columbia fastens on the whole nation the guilt of slaveholding. We at the North uphold it as truly as the South. That district belongs to no state, but to the nation. It is governed by the nation, and with as ample powers as are possessed by any State government. Its laws and institutions exist through the national will. Every legal act owes its authority to Congress. Of consequence, the slavery of the District is upheld by the nation. Not a slave is sold or whipped there, but by the sanction of the whole people. The slave code of the District admits of mitigations; and this code remains unmodified through the national will. The guilt of the institution thus lies at the door of every

man in the United States, unless he purge himself of it by solemn petition and remonstrance against the evil. What ! have the free States nothing to do with slavery ! This moment they are giving it active support.

And here it is interesting and instructive to observe, how soon and naturally, retribution follows crime. We uphold slavery in the District of Columbia ; and this is beginning to trench on our own freedom. It is making of no effect the right of petition, a right founded not on convention and charters, but on nature, and granted even by despots to their subjects. The pretext, on which the petitions for the Abolition of Slavery in Columbia have been denied the common attention by Congress, is not even specious. The right of Congress to perform the act for which the petitioners pray is undoubted. It may be said to have been demonstrated.\* Why, then, are the memorials of a free people on this subject treated with a scorn, to which no others are subjected ? It is pretended, that the petitioners are aiming at an object which the constitution places beyond the power of Congress, that they are seeking, through this action in the District, to abolish slavery in the States. To this, two replies at once occur. The first is, that among the petitioners, who hope by acting on the District to reach slavery everywhere, there is not one who has not also another object, which is the well-being of the District, or the abolition of slavery in it for its own sake. Allowing one of their ends to be unwarrantable, they distinctly propose another end, which the constitution sanctions. A second reply is, that it is not true of all who have petitioned for the abolition of slavery in the District, that they have aimed, in this way, at the abolition of it in the States. I have signed these petitions, I know not how often, and, in so doing, was in no degree moved by this

\* See a pamphlet on the Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia, by *Wythe*. This is one of the ablest pamphlets from the American press. It is ascribed to Theodore Weld.

*moral or legal?*

consideration. I was governed by other motives. I wished the District to be purified from a great evil. I wished the nation to be freed from the responsibility of ordaining and upholding slavery. I wished also by some public act to wash my own hands of this guilt. I felt myself bound to declare, that, if this nation uphold slavery, I am clear of it. And I hold it the duty of every man in the free States, who regards this institution as I do, to bear the same testimony against it, and, by solemn remonstrance to Congress, to purge his conscience of the nation's crime. As for myself, I could not petition against slavery in the District as a means of abolishing it in the States; for, as I have again and again declared, I can see but little connexion between these measures. Be this as it may, by sanctioning an acknowledged wrong at the seat of government, we have provoked a blow at our own privileges. In the original draught of the constitution, the right of petition was not referred to, for no one dreamed of its ever being questioned. Massachusetts, however, not satisfied with its foundation in nature and reason, chose to place it under the protection of the constitution. What this right is, we must judge from usage, and from its own nature and end. Thus interpreted, has it not been infringed by the power of slavery?\*

I have now considered one important relation of the free States to slavery, that which grows out of the District of Columbia. I now proceed to another. The constitution requires the free States to send back to bondage the fugitive slave. Does this show that we have no concern with the domestic institutions of the South? that the guilt of them, if such there be, is wholly theirs, and in no degree ours? This clause, makes us direct partakers of the guilt; and, of consequence, we have a vital interest in the matter of slavery. I know no provision of the constitution at which my moral feelings revolt, but this. Has not the

\* See note A.

slave a right to fly from bondage ? Who among us doubts it ? Let any man ask himself, how he should construe his rights, were he made a slave ; and does he not receive an answer from his own moral nature, as bright, immediate, and resistless, as lightning ? And yet we of the free States stop the flying slave, and give him back to bondage ! It does not satisfy me to be told, that this is a part of that sacred instrument, the constitution, which all are solemnly bound to uphold. No charter of man's writing can sanctify injustice, or repeal God's Eternal Law. I cannot escape the conviction, that every man, who aids the restoration of the flying slave, is a wrong-doer, though this is done by our best and wisest men with no self-reproach. To send him from a free State into bondage, seems to me much the same thing as to transport him from Africa to the West Indies or this country. I shall undoubtedly be told, that the fugitive is a slave by the laws of territory from which he escapes. But when laws are acknowledged violations of the most sacred rights, we cannot innocently be active in replacing men under their cruel power. The slave goes back not merely to toil and sweat for his master as before. He goes to be lacerated for the offence of flying from oppression. For hardly any crime is the slave so scored and scarred as for running away ; and for every lash that enters his flesh, we of the free States, who have given him back, must answer.

I know perfectly how these views will be received at the North and South. Some will call me a visionary, while more will fix on me a harder name. But I look above scoffers and denouncers to that pure, serene, almighty Justice, which is enthroned in Heaven, and inquire of God, the Father of us all, whether he approves the surrender of the flying slave. I shall be charged with irreverence towards the fathers of the Revolution, the framers of our glorious national charter. But I reply, that, great as they

were, they were fallible, and that the progress of opinion since their day, seems to me to have convicted them of error in the matter now in hand. I am aware too, that good and wise men, friends who are dear to me, will disapprove my free, strong language. But I must be faithful to the strong moral conviction which I cannot escape on this subject. If I am right, the truth which I speak, however questioned now, will not have been spoken in vain. To-day is not Forever. The men who now scorn or condemn, are not to live forever. Let a few years pass, and we shall all have vanished, and other actors will fill the stage, and the despised and neglected truths of this generation will become the honored ones of the next.

Before quitting this topic, it may be well just to glance at the reasoning, by which my views will be assailed. To the exposition of duty now given it will be objected, that the morality of the closet is not the morality of real life; that there is danger of pushing principles to extremes; that difficulties are to be grappled with in the conduct of public affairs, which retired men cannot understand; that there must be a compromise between the Ideal and the Actual; and that our rigid rules must be softened or bend, when consequences, unusually serious, will attend their observance. These common-places are not wholly without truth. Morality is sometimes turned, by inexperienced men, into rant and romance. Solitary dreamers, exalting imagination above reason and conscience, make life a stage for playing showy, dazzling parts, which pass with them for beautiful or heroic. I have little more sympathy with these over-refined, sublimated moralists, than with the common run of coarse, low-minded politicians. Duty is something practicable, something within reach, and which approves itself to us, not in moments of feverish excitement, but of deliberate thought. Good sense, which is another name for that calm, comprehensive reason, which sees things as they



are, and looks at all the circumstances and consequences of actions, is as essential to the moral direction of life, as in merely prudential concerns. Still more, there is a large class of actions, the relations of which are so complicated, and the consequences so obscure, that individual judgment is at fault, and we are bound to acquiesce in usage, especially if long-established, because this represents to us the collective experience of the race. All this is true. But it is also true, that there are grand, fundamental, moral principles, which shine with their own light, which approve themselves to the reason, conscience, and heart, and which have gathered strength and sanctity from the experience of nations and individuals through all ages. These are never to be surrendered to the urgency of the moment however pressing, or to imagined interests of individuals or states. Let these be sacrificed to hope or fear, and our foundation is gone, our anchor slipped. We have no fixtures in our own souls, nothing to rely on. No ground of faith in man is left us. Selfish, staggering policy, becomes the standard of duty, the guide of life, the law of nations. Now the question as to surrendering fugitive slaves, seems to me to fall plainly, immediately, under these great primitive truths of morality. It has no complexity about it, no mysterious elements, no obscure consequences. To send back the slave is to treat the innocent as guilty. It is to violate a plain natural right. It is to enforce a criminal claim. It is to take the side of the strong and oppressive against the weak and poor. It is to give up an unoffending fellow-creature to a degrading bondage, and to horrible laceration. The fixed universal consequence of this act is, the severe punishment, not of the injurious, but of the injured man. On this point, my moral nature speaks strongly, and I ought to give it utterance. If I err, there are enough to refute me. My authority is nothing, where a people are against me. I ask no authority ; but simply that what I say may be calmly, impartially weighed.

It will be said, that the South will insist on this stipulation, because it is necessary to the support of her institutions. This necessity may be questioned, because, if I may judge from a rough estimate, comparatively few fugitives are recovered from other States; and yet slavery lives and thrives. But if the necessity be real, then it follows, that the free States are the guardians, and essential supports of slavery. We are the jailors and constables of the institution; and yet, we are told, that we sustain no relation to slavery, that it is in no degree our concern!

I know it will be asked, what ought to be done, if the constitution bind us to an unlawful act. I reply; the individual, convinced of the unlawfulness, can have no difficulty. He must abstain from what he deems wrong. As to the community, should it ever come to the same conviction, it must take counsel from circumstances and from its wisest minds, as to the course, by which its peace and prosperity and the interest of the whole land may be reconciled with duty. Happily, the constitution may be amended, and this power is never so needed, as when the conscience of the citizen comes in collision with the government. I trust, that an amendment, reaching the present case, and demanded, not by the passions, but by the deliberate moral judgment of a large portion of the community, will not fail. I appeal to the generosity and honor of the South, and would ask, whether we, with our views of slavery, ought to be required to give it active support? I would ask, whether, in the present state of opinion in the civilized world, a slave country ought not to protect its own institution, without looking for aid to others? I would ask, too, whether a citizen, who views the government which he sustains, as pledged to wrong, deserves reproach for laboring to bring it into harmony with truth and rectitude? Does not the constitution, in making provision for its own amendment, imply the possibility of defect, and warrant

free discussion of its various clauses ? What avails our liberty of speech, if, on a grave question of duty, we must hold our peace ? If the citizen believes, that our very constitutional charter sanctions wrong, is he not bound by his participation of the national sovereignty, by the fact of his forming a portion of the body politic, to utter his honest thought ?

I proceed to consider another important relation which the North bear to slavery. We are bound, in case of an insurrection of the slaves against their masters, to put it down by force. This we ought to do, for such an insurrection would involve all the woes and crimes of civil war in the most aggravated forms, with no possibility of a beneficial result. It would be cruelty, massacre, without compensation or hope. The slaves are incapable of substituting free institutions for their bondage ; and extermination or a heavier yoke would end their struggles. We ought to disarm them ; but ought we to replace their chains ? Ought we to put them without protection under exasperated oppressors ? Ought we not to feel, that both parties in this fearful conflict have rights ? and ought we not to act as friends of both ? Is there nothing at which our minds revolt, in the thought of restoring unmitigated slavery ; of giving back the victim to the unrestrained power, which, under a spasmodic sense of wrong, he has struggled to throw off ? Should not every effort, short of physical force, be employed to obtain for him a better, a more righteous lot ? But the South, as we well know, would reject such mediation with scorn. Have we not, then, painful relations to slavery ? Have we not a deep interest in its abolition ?

In another view the North sustains relations to slavery. Slavery is our near neighbour ; and not a few among us grow hardened to it by familiarity. It perverts our moral sense. We cannot hold intimate connexion, national

union, with a region where so great an abuse is legalized, and yet escape contamination. To say nothing of friendly, domestic intercourse, our commercial relations with the slave States give to not a few a pecuniary interest in the institution. The slave is mortgaged to the northern merchant. The slaves' toil is the northern merchant's wealth, for it produces the great staple on which all the commercial dealings of the country turn. As our merchants and manufacturers cast their eyes southward, what do they see? Cotton, Cotton, nothing but Cotton. This fills the whole horizon of the South. What care they for the poor human tools by whom it is reared? Their sympathies are with the man with whom they deal, who trusts them and is trusted by them, and not with the bondmen, by whose sweat they thrive. What change do they desire in a system so gainful? Under these various influences, the moral feeling of the North in regard to slavery is more or less palsied. Men call it in vague language an evil, just as they call religion a good; in both cases giving assent to a lifeless form of words, which they forget whilst they utter them, and which have no power over their lives.

There is another way in which Southern slavery bears seriously on the North. It blends itself intimately with the whole political action of the country, determines its parties, decides important measures of government, is a brand of discord, a fountain of bitter strifes, and, whilst it lasts, will never suffer us to become truly one people. We call ourselves one, but slavery makes us two. National unity implies a general unity of character; but slave States and free States are severed by deep, indelible differences of mind and feeling. In the former, where one half of the population are semibarbarous or semibrutal, and the other half trained to mastery, to lordship, there can be little comprehension of, and little sympathy with, the latter, where the recognition of the equal rights of all is the

pervading principle of government and of common life. The South, counting labor degradation, must look with contempt on the most important and influential portions of the North, that is, our great mechanic and agricultural classes. From these fundamental differences in the very constitution of society, must grow up jealousies, real and imaginary collisions of interests, mutual dislike, mutual fear. Congress must be an arena, in which Northern and Southern parties will be arrayed against each other; and that portion of the Union, which has the strongest bond of union within itself, will, on the whole, master the other. A Northern man thinks it no hard thing to show, that slavery has chiefly ruled the country, has deeply influenced Northern commerce and manufactures, has played off Northern parties against each other, whilst a Southern man undoubtedly can produce a list of grievances in return. Thus slavery is the bane of our Union. Nothing else can separate us. Without this element of war and woe in our institutions, our nation would be more indissolubly bound together by mutual benefits, than any other nation is by habit and tradition. Have we, then, nothing to do with slavery? Is it the concern of the South alone? Are we bound to keep silence on it, because it nowhere touches us, because it is as foreign to us as the slavery of Turkey and Russia? Oh no. It more than touches us. We feel its grasp. We owe it to ourselves, as well as to humanity, to do what we lawfully and peacefully may to procure its abolition.

I have thus considered at length the right and fitness of discussing freely the subject of slavery. Why is it that this right is questioned? What lies at the bottom of the charge against us, of unwarrantable interference with what is not our proper concern? The real cause of the complaint, though not suspected at the South, is the insensi-



bility which prevails there in regard to this evil. Could the slaveholder look on it from our point of view, could he see it as we do, he would no longer blame our remonstrances against it. He would himself join the cry. But here lies his unhappiness. Long habit has hardened him to slavery. Perhaps he calls it an evil, but this word on his lips means something very different from what it means on ours. Habit is as powerful over the understanding and conscience as over the will. An institution handed down from our fathers, sanctioned by laws, and under which we have grown up, be it ever so criminal, cannot shock us as it does a stranger, and we naturally count the stranger's rebuke an insult and wrong. Here lies the vice of Mr. Clay's speech. He silently assumes the innocence of slavery. He does not dream of the need of apologizing for himself as a slaveholder. He cannot realize, that, in the view of the civilized world, this is a brand, which shows through all the brightness of his talents and fame. He approaches the subject with a tone of confidence, and, though the advocate of flagrant injustice, takes the ground of an injured man. We, who speak and write against slavery, find our vindication and our duty in the enormity of the evil. How natural that those, who have lived in fellowship with the evil from their birth, should look on us as rash unwarrantable meddlers with what is their business alone !

I have said, that we rest the justice and obligation of our moral efforts against slavery, on the greatness of the evil. It might then be expected, that to make out our case more fully, I should enlarge on this topic, and show that slavery is not an imaginary monster, but a combination of wrongs, and crimes, and woes, not only justifying, but demanding, the opposition of all good men. But I have, in a former publication, travelled this ground, and I cannot unnecessarily renew the pain which I then suffered. There is, however, one topic on which something should

be said. I refer to the common apology for slavery, by which the whole South, and not a few at the North, conceal from themselves the true character of this evil, and repel as unwarrantable our efforts for its destruction. Whenever the subject is discussed, we are told, that through the lenity of the master, the slave suffers less than the laborer in most other countries. He has more comforts, we hear. He is happier. To this refuge the slaveholder always flies. My next object, therefore, and one intimately connected with the preceding, will be to examine this position.

I begin with observing, that it is honorable to our times, that such a defence as this is urged and required. It shows the progress of civilization and Christianity, that the master holds himself bound to maintain, that his victim is happier for his bondage. An ancient Roman never thought of seeking a justification of slavery in its blessings, never took the ground of his being a benefactor to those whom he oppressed. We have here a sign of the great moral revolution which is making its way through society ; and we may be assured, that, when slavery can only stand on the footing of its beneficence, it is not far from its fall.

I have never been disposed to deny, that at the South slavery wore a milder aspect than in other countries, though by some this is strenuously denied. I concede the fact ; and still more, I cannot doubt, that the condition of the slave continues to improve. The cry, that the slave is treated more severely on account of the abolition movement at the North, cannot be true on the whole, though particular restraints may be increased. He is and must be treated more kindly. We have here better evidence than rumor. A master was never made more severe, by having the eyes of the world turned upon him, especially when the world, as at present, is more than ever penetrated with the spirit of humanity. Slavery

exists at this moment under the broad light of Heaven. The sound of the lash resounds through the free States, and through all nations. The master is held responsible to his race for his power. Can this make him more severe? The defences which we hear from the South, set us at ease on this point. The anxiety of the planter to show the northern visiter the comforts of his slaves, sets us at ease. Within a short time, more than one gentle voice of woman from the South has spoken to me of the happiness of the slave. The master feels, that he can only keep himself within the pale of civilized society, by practising kindness to a certain extent. All his defenders at the North plead his kindness. Who does not see, that, under these influences, the severities of the system must be mitigated, and that the advocates of freedom are doing immediate good to the poor creatures whose cause they espouse?

I believe, too, that not only is the general treatment of the slaves improved, but that their religious means are increased, in consequence of the Agitation at the North. We are told, that they are now denied instruction in reading. But ministers, churches, masters, are waked up, as never before, to the obligation of giving to the slaves the blessings of Christianity, and have a new anxiety to roll away the reproach of bringing up hordes of heathens within their borders. I must say, however, that whilst we must give credit to the South for increased religious attention to the slave, I expect little good from it. And I thus speak, not merely from the reports of intelligent witnesses, but from immutable moral principles. It is hard to graft good on what is essentially evil and corrupt; hard for the man who oppresses to exalt his victim. There is always a tendency to unity in the various influences which a man exerts. To enslave a human being, is to war against his religious, as truly as his social and physical nature. The African is, indeed, very susceptible, and easily puts on the

show of piety. Nothing is easier than to draw forth groans or shouts from a colored congregation. Nothing easier than to gather this people by crowds into churches. But the slave is incapable of a nobler reverence towards God than towards his master. He is equally, I fear, a slave before both. This is one of the evils of slavery, that it perverts, turns into an instrument of degradation, that highest sentiment of our nature, reverence. In truth, it is hard to comprehend, how the slaveholder can preach the grand principles of Christianity; how he can set forth God as the Universal Father, who looks on all men with an equally tender love, and watches, with an equal severity of justice, over the rights of all. Indeed, how difficult must it be for either masters or slaves to get into the heart of this religion, to understand its deep purpose, when the chief element of such a community is in direct hostility to its spirit. I speak not from report, but from the general principles of human nature; and these would lead me to fear, that, in such a community, the religion of the higher classes as well as of the lowest, must be, to an unusual extent, one or another form of superstition, that is, a substitution of dogmas, ceremonies, or feelings, for the manly and enlightened piety which Jesus taught, and which makes the worship of God to consist chiefly in the imitation of his Universal Justice and Universal Love.

This is somewhat of a digression, though not exceeding the freedom of epistolary communication. I return to the subject. I acknowledge, and rejoice to acknowledge, that slavery is mitigated by kindness at the South, though, as we shall see, it necessarily includes much cruelty. I will allow to the full extent what is urged in favor of the comforts of a state of bondage, though the concession is not warranted by facts. I still say, that the apology fails of its end; that it does not touch the essential, fundamental evil of slavery, which is, the Injustice it does to a human being.

It is no excuse for wronging a man, that you make him as comfortable as is consistent with the wrong. A man, shutting me up in prison, would poorly atone for his violation of my rights, by feeding and clothing me to my heart's content. I claim from my oppressor, not food and clothes, but freedom. I insist, that he leave to me, unrestrained, the right of using my limbs and powers for my own and others' good. A deep instinct of my soul, founded at once in my spiritual and physical nature, calls out for personal liberty. No matter, that our chains are woven of silk. They are as iron, because they are chains. Let a master draw round us a line, which may not be passed without our being driven back by a whip ; and for this very reason we should burn to escape. Such is the thirst for freedom, breathed by God into the human spirit. Slavery is a violence to our nature, to which nothing but abjectness can reconcile a man, and which we honor him for repelling.

It is vain to say, that the slave suffers less than other laborers. We have no right to inflict a suffering, greater or less, on an innocent fellow-creature. Injustice is injustice, be the extent of its influence ever so confined. Were one of our governments, by an act of usurpation, to abridge the free motions and the rights of the laboring class, would it be a mitigation of the wrong, that the laborer still exceeded in privileges and means of pleasure the serfs of Russia ? It is no excuse for keeping a man in the dust, that you throw him better food than he can earn by his free industry. Be just before you are generous. The lenity, which quiets you in wrong doing, becomes a crime. Do not boast of your humanity to those whom you own, when it is a cruel wrong to be their owner. Some highwaymen have taken pride in the gentlemanly, courteous style, in which they have eased the traveller of his purse. They have given him back a part of the spoils, that he might travel comfortably home. But they were robbers still.



A criminal relation cannot be made virtuous by the mode of sustaining it. Cæsar was a clement dictator, but usurpation did not therefore cease to be a vice.

It is no excuse for taking possession of a man, that we can make him happier. We are poor judges of another's happiness. He was made to work it out for himself. Our opinion of his best interests is particularly to be distrusted, when our own interest is to be advanced by making him our tool. Especially if, to make him happy, we must drive him as a brute, subject him to the lash, it is plainly time to give up our philanthropic efforts, and to let him seek his good in his own way.

Allow that the sufferings of the slave are less than those of the free laborer. But these sufferings are Wrongs, and this changes their nature. Pain as pain, is nothing compared with pain when it is a wrong. A blow, given me by accident, may fell me to the earth; but, after all it is a trifle. A slight blow, inflicted in scorn or with injurious intent, is an evil, which, without aid from my principles, I could not bear. Let God's providence confine me to my room by disease, and I more than submit, for in his dispensations I see parental goodness seeking my purity and peace. But let man imprison me, without inflicting disease, and how intolerable my narrow bounds. So if the elements take away our property, we resign it without a murmur; but if man rob us of our fortune, poverty weighs on us as a mountain. Any thing can be borne, but the will and the power of the selfish, unrighteous man. There is also this difference between sufferings from God or nature, and sufferings from human injustice. The former we are almost always able to soften or remove by industry and skill, by studying the laws of nature, or by seeking aid and sympathy from men. These sufferings are intended to awaken our powers, and to strengthen social dependencies. Nature opposes us that we may resist her, and, by resistance, may grow strong.

But the owner of his fellow-creatures resents the resistance as a wrong, and cuts them off from help from their kind.

It will be said, that the slave has nothing of this consciousness of his wrongs, which adds such weight to sufferings. He has no self-respect, we hear, to be wounded when he is lashed. To him, as to the ox, a blow is but a blow. And is this an apology for slavery; that it destroys all sense of wrongs, blunts the common sensibilities of human nature, makes man tamer than the nobler animals under inflicted pain? It is this prostration of self-respect, and of just indignation for wrongs, which sets an additional seal on slavery as an outrage on humanity. But it is not true, that the spirit of a man is wholly killed in the slave. The moral nature never dies. He often feels a wrong in the violence which he cannot resist. He has often bitter hatred towards the cruel overseer. He ponders in secret over his oppressed lot. There are deep groans of conscious injury and revenge, which, though smothered by fear, do not less agonize the soul.

In these remarks, we have seen how much the slave may suffer, though little of what is called cruelty enters into his lot. My hostility to the system does not rest primarily on the physical agonies it inflicts, but on a deeper foundation; on its flagrant injustice, and on the misery necessarily involved in a system of wrong. Slavery, however, is not to be absolved from the guilt of cruelty. However tempered with kindness, it does and must bear this brand. Who that knows human nature, can question whether irresponsible power will be abused? Such power breeds the very passions which make abuse sure. Besides, it is exposed to great temptation. Slaves are necessarily irritating. Their laziness, thievishness, lying propensities, sulkiness, the natural fruits of their condition, are sore trials to those placed over them. Slavery necessarily generates in its victims the very vices, which are most fitted to fret and

exasperate the owner or overseer. Under such circumstances more cruelty might be expected than exists. After all the instances of barbarity we hear from the South, the patience of the slaveholder is more to be wondered at than his severity. The relation he sustains is the last for a good man to covet. It is, of all others, most fitted to nourish the passions, against which, religion calls us to watch. He who would not be "led into temptation," should cast away with dread irresponsible power over his fellow-creatures. That, under such circumstances, selfishness, the passion for dominion, avarice, anger, impatience, lust, should break out into fearful excesses, is as necessary, as that the stone should fall, or the fire destroy.

One instance of cruelty at the South has lately found its way into some of our papers, and that is, the employment of blood-hounds in parts of the new States, for the recovery, or, if this be resisted, for the destruction, of the fugitive slaves. This statement has been questioned or denied, by those who incline to favorable views of the whole subject, as an atrocity too monstrous for belief. I have not inquired into its authenticity. But that one breed of blood-hounds exists at the South, we know; a breed, not armed with fangs, but rifles, and who shoot down the fugitive when no other way is left for arresting his flight. And where lies the difference between tearing his flesh by teeth, or sending bullets through his heart, skull, or bowels. My humanity can draw no lines between these infernal modes of despatching a fellow-creature, guilty of no offence, but that of asserting one of the primary, inalienable rights of his nature. It is bad enough to oppress a man; but, when he escapes from oppression, to pursue him with mortal weapons, to shatter his bones, to mutilate him, and thus send him from a weary life with an agonizing, bloody death, is murder in an aggravated form. The laws which sanction the shooting of the flying slave, are, to my mind,

attempts to legalize murder. They who uphold them do, however unconsciously, uphold murder. It is vain to say, that this is an accompaniment of slavery, which cannot be avoided. The accompaniment proves the character of the system. It is a fearful law of our condition, that crimes cannot stand alone. Slavery and murder go hand in hand. Having taken the first step in a system of cruelty and wrong, we can set no bounds to our career.

Still I do not charge cruelty on slavery as its worst evil. The great evil is, the contempt and violation of human rights, the injustice which treats a man as a brute, and which breaks his spirit to make him a human tool. It is the injustice, which denies him the means of improvement, which denies him scope for his powers, which dooms him to an unchangeable lot, which robs him of the primitive right of human nature, that of bettering his outward and inward state. It is the injustice, which converts his social connexions into a curse. Here, perhaps, the influence of slavery is most blighting. Our social connexions are intended by God to be among our chief means of improvement and happiness ; and a system, which wars with these, is the most cruel outrage on our nature. Other men's chief relations are to wife and children, to brother and sister, to beings endeared by nature, and who awaken the heart to tenderness and faithful love. The slave's chief relation is to his owner, to the man who wrongs him. This it is, which above all things determines his lot, and this infuses poison into all his other social connexions. This destroys the foundation of domestic happiness by sullyng female purity, by extinguishing in woman the sense of honor. This violates the sanctity of the marriage bond. This tears the wife from the husband, or condemns her to insult, perhaps, laceration in his sight. This takes from the parent his children. His children belong to another, and are disposed of for another's gain. Thus

God's great provisions for softening, refining, elevating human nature are thwarted. Thus social ties are liable to be turned into bitterness and wrong.

An ecclesiastical document, which appeared not long ago in some of our papers, is a strong illustration of the influence of slavery on the relations of domestic life. It confirms, what we have often heard, that the slaves are commanded to marry or live together, for the purpose of keeping up the stock of the estate. It shows us, too, that when slaves are sold at a distance from their original homes, they are commanded to give up the wives or husbands whom they have left, and to serve the estate by forming new connexions. Against this tyranny one would think, that the slave would find some protection in his religious teachers. One would think, that the Christian minister would interpose, to save the colored member of the church from being forced to renounce the wife from whom he had been torn ; that he would struggle to rescue him from an adulterous union, against which his affections as well as sense of duty may revolt. But, according to this document, an association of ministers decreed, that the slave, sold at a distance from his home, was to be regarded as dead to his former wife ; that he was not to be treated in this concern as a free agent ; that he was not to be countenanced by the church in resisting his master's will. The document is given below.\* What a comment on

\* The following extract is made from the Antislavery record of February 9, 1836.

"The following query was, not long since, presented to the Savannah River Baptist Association of Ministers. 'Whether, in case of involuntary separation, of such a character as to preclude all prospect of future intercourse, the parties ought to be allowed to marry again?' This query was put in regard to husband and wife separated by sale ; an every-day result of the great internal slave-trade. They answered ;

" 'That such separation, among persons situated as our slaves are, is civilly a separation by death ; and they believe, that in the sight of



Southern institutions ! It shows, how religion is made their tool, how Christianity is used to do violence to the most sacred feelings and ties, that the breed of slaves may be kept up. It shows us, that this iniquitous system pollutes by its touch, the divinest, the holiest provision of God for human happiness and virtue.

There is a short method of palliating these and all the enormities of slavery, which is more and more resorted to at the South. The slaveholder looks abroad on the world, and, finding in other countries a great amount of hardship, crime, prostitution, penury, woe, he proceeds to say, that these are the lot of humanity, and that they are not borne more extensively or painfully in slave countries than in others, perhaps even less. Why, then, is slavery so great an evil ? Without stopping to examine these alleged facts, I see an important difference in the cases brought into comparison. In other civilized countries, the evils charged on them are seen and deplored, and it is acknowledged that earnest efforts should be made for their removal. Religion and philanthropy, though still half slumbering, are waking up to a sense of great responsibility, and to new struggles with the giant evils of society. It is acknowledged, that, as far as institutions entail on the great laboring class, poverty, vice, prostitution, domestic infidelity, and brutal debasement of intellect and heart, they ought to be changed. Nowhere but in slave countries are the civil power, the sword, the laws, the wealth, the religion, of a community deliberately pledged to the support

God it would be so viewed. To forbid second marriages in such case, would be to expose the parties, not only to stronger hardships and strong temptations, but to church censure for acting in obedience to their masters, who cannot be expected to acquiesce in a regulation at variance with justice to the slaves, and to the spirit of that command which regulates marriage among Christians. The slaves are not free agents ; and a dissolution by death is not more entirely without their consent and beyond their control, than by such separation.' ”

of a system, which is known and acknowledged to deprive one half of the people of property and civil rights, known to doom them to perpetual ignorance and licentiousness, known to rob the individual of the means of progress, and to poison the sources of domestic well-being. To slave countries belongs the presumptuousness of *ordaining* the perpetual debasement of half the community, on no better ground, than that from the laws of nature a large amount of evil must adhere to the social state. What! Does Providence intend no progress in human affairs? Does Christianity encourage and enjoin no efforts for a happier condition of humanity? Is man to take his rules of conduct towards his fellow-creatures from the corruptions which barbarous times have transmitted to the present? May man, sheltering himself under Divine providence, perpetuate evils, which God, through the conscience and by his Son, commands us, to the extent of our power, to diminish, and to expel from the social state?

To return to the kindness, which is said to be practised at the South towards the slaves. I wish not to disparage it. Let us open our eyes to whatever is beautiful or promising in human life. I could laud this kindness as heartily as any man, did I not find it used, both here and at the South, as a buttress to the tottering cause of slavery. I am bound, therefore, to inquire into its real value, to give it its due, but nothing more than its due. One obvious remark is, that kindness without justice is of little moral worth. It is a feeling rather than a principle. Principle enjoins justice, and will not offer favors as an atonement for wrongs. — Again, the kindness at the South, of which we hear, finds its occasion in a dependence and helplessness, which the kind agent has himself created. Is there much merit in taking care of those, whom we have stripped of all property, of self-help, of all the means of taking care of themselves? — There is another subtrac-

tion from kindness to the slave, inasmuch as it is a matter of interest. The human machine cannot work without food, raiment, and health ; and, in times like the present, when slave-labor is more than usually profitable, there cannot be a better investment of money, than in comforts which keep the slave in a working state. — A more important consideration is, that the kindness to the slaves is not of the right stamp. It wants a moral character. The master is kind to them because they are *his own*, not because they are fellow-creatures. The true, grand foundation of love is wanting. How kind are men to dogs and horses, which they have long owned ! They feed them, caress them, admit them to their familiarity. But the sort of kindness, which is shown to the brute, becomes a wrong and insult when extended to the man. He must be loved and respected as a man. This is his due ; and, had he the feelings of a man, nothing less would content him. The slave is treated kindly, because he is a slave, and has the spirit of a slave. Once let the spirit of a man wake in him, once let him know his rights, and show his knowledge in words, looks, and bearing, and immediately he falls under suspicion and dislike, and a severity, designed to break him down, is substituted for kindness. He is less liked, in proportion as he acts from a principle in his own breast, and not from his master's will. And what is the worth of such kindness ? The slave, were he not so degraded, would regard it as a cruel mockery. — Again, I cannot but think, that a good deal of the kindness at the South has for its object to quiet the self-reproach, which, at this age, can hardly but exist in a latent state, in the slaveholder's breast. Men must, in some way or other, strike up a peace with their own consciences. He who holds his fellow-creatures in bondage, must reconcile himself to himself ; and nowhere is the task so difficult as in a free country, where the master claims liberty as an in-

alienable right, and clings to it more than to life. In such a country, he can only escape the consciousness of wrong, by flattering himself, that he is the benefactor of the slave. But kindness, when thus made an opiate to conscience, is more a crime than a virtue. — As a conclusion to this head, I am willing and happy to acknowledge, that the kindness of the South to the slave is to be ascribed, in part, to the religious and moral improvements of the times. We live under brighter lights than former generations ; and these influences penetrate into all the relations of life. But the lights, which induce the master to use his power more mercifully, do not finish their mission by this teaching. They command him to renounce his power altogether. They convict him of usurpation. The principles, which persuade him to be a lenient owner, if carried out, forbid him to be an owner at all. That state of civilization, which dictates mercy towards the slave, makes slavery a greater crime. Oppression is to be measured, not by its weight, but by the light under which it is practised. To rob men of liberty in an age, which recognises human rights, and God's equal love to all his human creatures, is a very different thing from enslaving men in ages of darkness and despotism. A slight cruelty now is a more heinous crime, than an atrocity in barbarous times. Must we not feel, then, that slavery among us, however mild, has a guilt in the sight of God unknown before ? Its very kindnesses, extorted from it by the clear lights of religion and freedom, become testimonies to its guilt. This may seem severe. But God knows, that my desire is, not to give pain, but to set forth what seems to me great moral truth, for the benefit of my fellow-creatures.

I have thus attempted to show, that there is nothing in the mitigating circumstances of slavery to diminish the reprobation with which it is regarded by the civilized world, and

nothing to justify the charge brought against its opposers of unwarrantable interference. Having finished this part of my task, I shall now pass to those portions of Mr. Clay's speech, in which he meets the arguments against slavery by attempting to show, that emancipation is impossible. The arguments on which he rests are chiefly these, the amount of property which would be sacrificed by emancipation, next, the amalgamation of the races, and, lastly, the civil wars, ending in extermination of one or the other race, which would follow the measure. I shall consider these in their order.

Mr. Clay maintains, that "the total value of the slave property in the United States is twelve hundred millions of dollars," and considers this "immense amount" as putting the freedom of the slave out of the question. Who can be expected to make such a sacrifice? The accuracy of this valuation of the slaves I have nothing to do with. I admit it without dispute. But the impression made on my mind by the vastness of the sum, is directly the reverse of the effect on Mr. Clay. Regarding slavery as throughout a wrong, I see, in the immenseness of the value of the slaves, the enormous amount of the robbery committed on them. I see "twelve hundred millions of dollars" seized, extorted by unrighteous force. I know not on the face of the earth a system of such enormous spoliation. I know nowhere injustice on such a giant scale. And yet, the vast amount of this wrong is, in the view of many, a reason for its continuance! If I strip my neighbour of a few dollars, I ought to restore them; but if I have spoiled him of his All, and grown rich on the spoils, I must not be expected to make restitution! Justice, when it will cost much, loses its binding power! What makes the present case more startling is, that this vast amount of property consists not of the goods of injured men, but of the men themselves. Here are human nerves, living men, worth at



the market price, "twelve hundred millions of dollars." That this enormous wrong should be perpetuated in the bosom of a Christian and civilized community, is a sad comment on our times. Sad and strange, that a distinguished man, in the face of a great people and of the world, should talk with entire indifference of fellow-creatures, held and labelled as property, to this "immense amount."

But this property, we are told, is not to be questioned, on account of its long duration. "Two hundred years of legislation have sanctioned and *sanctified* negro slaves as property." Nothing but respect for the speaker could repress criticism on this unhappy phraseology. We will trust it escaped him without thought. But to confine ourselves to the argument from duration; how obvious the reply! Is injustice changed into justice by the practice of ages? Is my victim made a righteous prey, because I have bowed him to the earth till he cannot rise? For more than two hundred years heretics were burned, and not by mobs, not by Lynch law, but by the decrees of councils, at the instigation of theologians, and with the sanction of the laws and religions of nations; and was this a reason for keeping up the fires, that they had burned two hundred years? In the Eastern world, successive despots, not for two hundred years, but for twice two thousand, have claimed the right of life and death over millions, and with no law but their own will, have beheaded, bowstrung, starved, tortured unhappy men without number, who have incurred their wrath; and does the lapse of so many centuries sanctify murder and ferocious power?

But the great argument remains. It is said that this property must not be questioned, because it is established by law. "That is property, which the law declares *to be* property."\* Thus, human law is made supreme, decisive, in a grave question of morals. Thus, the idea of an

\* The italics are by Mr. Clay.

eternal, immutable justice is set at nought. Thus, the great rule of human life is made to be the ordinance of interested men. But there is a higher tribunal, a throne of equal justice, immovable by the conspiracy of all human legislatures. "That is property, which the law declares to be property." Then the laws have only to declare you, or me, or Mr. Clay, to be property, and we become chattels and are bound to bear the yoke ! Does not every man's moral nature repel this doctrine too intuitively to leave time or need for argument ?

I always hear with pain, the doctrine, too common among lawyers, that property is the creature of the law ; as if it had no natural foundation, as if it were not a natural right, as if it did not precede all laws, and were not their ground, instead of being their effect. Government is ordained, not to create, so much as to protect and regulate property ; and the chief strength of government lies in the sanction, which the moral sense, the natural idea of right, gives to honestly earned possessions. The notion which I am combating is essentially revolutionary and destructive. We hear much of Radicalism, of Agrarianism, at the present day. But of all radicals, the most dangerous, perhaps, is he, who makes property the "creature of law" ; because, what law creates, it can destroy. If we of this Commonwealth have no right in our persons, houses, ships, farms, but what a vote of the legislature or the majority confers, then a vote of the same masses may strip us of them all, and transfer them to others ; and the right will go with the law. According to this doctrine, I see not why the majority, who are always comparatively poor, may not step into the mansions and estates of the rich. I see not why the law cannot make some idle neighbour the rightful owner of your fortune or mine. What better support can Radicalism ask than this ?

It may be objected, that legislation does, in fact, touch and take a part of the citizens' property, and if a part, why

not the whole. I reply, that the general end, for which legislation touches property is, to make it more secure. It levies taxes for the execution of laws, under which all property is safe. I reply again, that a righteous legislature, in touching property, still shows it respect, by equalizing, as far as possible, the burdens it imposes, and by making compensation, when it can, for what it alienates or destroys. I am aware, indeed, that legislation may, in certain circumstances, make important changes in the tenure of property; and the reason is, that property is not the only human right, and consequently that it may sometimes come into collision with other rights, in which case, all are to be reconciled according to the highest moral law. Thus, a community threatened with destruction, may appropriate to its use what it cannot restore, or it may set bounds to the individual accumulation of wealth, where this shall plainly menace ruin to its institutions. The right of gaining property, being universal, does itself require, that the individual shall not be suffered so to accumulate, as to take from multitudes the chance of earning means of support, or as to create a power dangerous to the rights of any class of citizens. According to these principles, entails may be forbidden, and laws, relating to testaments, may be so framed as to break up overgrown estates. But in all these cases, legislation, in touching property, treats it with reverence, and acknowledges its foundation in immutable justice. There are, then, principles of property, which no laws can move. Man cannot make and unmake it at will. As he is physically unable to turn the sun and air into private possessions, so he is morally incompetent to turn his fellow-creatures into chattels. Both cases are out of the province of law. Even Mr. Clay, in urging the wrong which would be done to slaveholders, should the law strip them of their slaves, acknowledges that law is not the supreme rule of right; for, if it were, with what face could they complain of being wrongfully dispossessed?

Mr. Clay, having thus summarily settled the validity of the slaveholder's claim, goes on to affirm, that the opposite doctrine, the doctrine that man cannot be rightfully seized and held as property, is "a visionary dogma," "the wild speculation of theorists and innovators." Does not Mr. Clay know, that the English nation, from its highest to its lowest ranks, with scarce an exception, pronounces the pretended right of property in men, an aggravated wrong? Does he not know, that this same doctrine pervades the continent? that, indeed, it is the acknowledged sentiment of Europe, with the exception of Russia and Turkey? Does he not know, that it is the faith of the vast majority of the free States? In truth, I know none, who, in their hearts, believe, that man may rightfully be made property, with the exception of some technical lawyers, a body too much inclined to exalt precedents above principles, to make the statute book the standard of truth and duty, and practically to recognise no higher law than that of a majority or a king.

I maintain, then, that the slaveholder has no defence in law, or in the opinion of the civilized world, for continuing to hold slaves. He is bound to free them, and to do it the sooner on account of their great value. He has held this vast amount of others' property long enough, and the rightful owners have ground for urgency in proportion to the extent and duration of their wrongs.

"But must the slaveholder make himself poor," says many a man at the North, as well as at the South. I answer, by asking those who put the question, what they would deem to be their own duty, should they find themselves in possession of a large amount belonging to their neighbour? Would they go on to hold it, because honesty would make them poor? Then they are criminal, and deserve to join their partners in the State-prison. He who is just, only as long as justice will secure him a warm home and the comforts of life, should be called by his right name,

an unprincipled man. I cannot doubt, that multitudes at the South, if thoroughly convinced of holding what is not their own, would renounce it in obedience to God and justice.

But a more important objection remains. Men of honor and principle, who recognise immediately the obligation of individuals to restore what is not their own, will tell me, that, in the present case, not merely individuals, but states, bodies politic, with their order and essential interests, are concerned; that when a particular kind of property becomes inwoven with all the possessions, transactions, and habits of a community, sudden changes in it may induce universal bankruptcy, and threaten society with dissolution; and they may ask whether I am prepared, in such cases, to insist punctiliously on giving every man his due? I answer, that this reasoning applies only to what may be lawfully held as property, to material things, such as houses and lands. It is acknowledged, that a man's right to these is controlled and superseded in extreme cases, when the assertion of it would bring great evils on the state. This is a fundamental restriction on the right of property. But in allowing this, I do not allow, that human beings, God's rational and moral creatures, who cannot be held as property without unutterable wrong, may still be retained as chattels, from apprehension of evils, which restoration of their rights may bring on the state. No fear of consequences can authorize us to violate an eternal, immutable law of justice. I deny, however, that the dreaded consequences of doing right, in the case before us, can occur. I deny, that Providence has ordained, or can ever ordain, remediless injustice, as an essential condition of social security. On what ground is this wide-spreading ruin to be feared, from destroying property in slaves? Is emancipation an untried thing? Has it not been carried through again and again, in countries where social order was less confirmed, and ideas of property were looser, than among ourselves? In the West Indies, has not the revolution been suddenly



accomplished without the least shock to property? Have we not reason to believe, that the price of real estate has risen under the change? The slave is a working machine; and is his power to work paralysed by liberty? Does not the master, possessing as he does the soil and capital, possess unfailing means of obtaining from the colored man, whether bond or free, the labor required for the cultivation of the earth? And with this grand original source of all wealth untouched, is not society secured against universal insolvency? How apt are men to raise phantoms to terrify themselves from an unwelcome duty!

Mr. Clay insists, that the slaveholder has a right to full compensation from those who call on him to surrender his slaves. I utterly deny such a right in a man who surrenders what is not his own. I cheerfully acknowledge, however, that whilst, in strict justice, the slaveholder has no claim to indemnity, he has a title to sympathy and equitable consideration. A man, who, by conscientious and honorable relinquishment of what he discovers to be another's, makes himself comparatively poor, deserves respect and liberal aid. There are few at the North, who would not joyfully acquiesce in the plan of that distinguished statesman, Rufus King, for large appropriations of the public land to the indemnifying of sufferers under an act of universal abolition.

It is believed, however, that compensation, even on the most liberal scale, would not be a great amount; for the planters, in general, would suffer little, if at all, from emancipation. This change would make them richer, rather than poorer. One would think, indeed, from the common language on the subject, that the negroes were to be annihilated by being set free; that the whole labor of the South was to be destroyed by a single blow. But the colored man, when freed, will not vanish from the soil. He will stand there with the same muscles as before, only

strung anew by liberty ; with the same limbs to toil, and with stronger motives to toil than before. He will receive wages, instead of a fixed allowance ; and wages are found in many parts of the West Indies, to get from him nearly twice the labor which he performed during bondage. He will work from hope, not fear ; will work for himself, not for others ; and, unless all the principles of human nature are reversed under a black skin, he will work better than before. For what mighty loss then does the slaveholder need compensation ? We believe that agriculture will revive, worn-out soils be renewed, and the whole country assume a brighter aspect under free labor. The slaveholder, in relinquishing what is another's, will add a new value to what is unquestionably his own.

The next objection to Emancipation is, that it will produce an amalgamation of the white and colored races. This objection is a strange one from a resident at the South. Can any impartial man fear, that amalgamation will, in any event, go on more rapidly than at the present moment ? Slavery tends directly to intermingle the races. It robs the colored female of protection against licentiousness. Still worse, it robs her of self-respect. It dooms her class to prostitution. Nothing, but freedom, can give her the feelings of a woman, and can shield her from brutal lust. Slavery does something worse than sell off her children. It makes her a stranger to the delicacy of her sex. Undoubtedly a smile will be provoked by expressions of concern for the delicacy of a colored woman. But is this a conventional, arbitrary accomplishment, appropriate only to a white skin ? Is it not the fit, natural, beautiful adorning, which God designed for every woman ; and does not a curse belong to an institution which blights it, not accidentally, but by a necessary, fixed operation ? It is the relation of property in human beings, which generates the

impure connexions of the South, and which prevents the natural repugnance, growing out of difference of color, from exerting its power. As far as marriage is concerned, there seems to be a natural repugnance between the races ; and in saying this, no unfeeling contempt is expressed towards either race. Marriage is an affair of taste. We do not marry the old ; yet how profoundly we respect them. How few women would a man of refinement consent to marry ; yet he honors the sex. The barrier of color, as far as this particular connexion is concerned, implies no degradation of the African race. There seems, as I have said, a repugnance in nature ; but if not natural, the prejudice is as strong as an innate feeling ; and how much it may be relied on to prevent connexions, we may judge from the whole experience of the North. There is another security against this union in our country. I refer to the mark which has been set on the colored race by their past slavery ; a mark which generations will not efface, and in which the whites will have no desire to participate. Even were the slaves of the South of our own color, and were slavery to fix on them and on their children some badge or memorial, such as the impress of a lash on the forehead, or of a chain on the cheek, how few among the class of free descent would be anxious to ally themselves with this separated portion of the race. The spirit of caste, which almost seems the strongest in human nature, will certainly postpone amalgamation long enough, to give the world opportunity to understand and manage the subject much better than ourselves. To continue a system of wrong from dread of such evils, only shows the ingenuity of power in defending itself. The fable of the wolf and the lamb drinking at the same stream, comes spontaneously to our thoughts. But allowing what I have contested, allowing that amalgamation is to be anticipated, then, I maintain, we have no right to resist it. Then, it is not unnatural.

If the tendencies to it are so strong, that they can only be resisted by a systematic degradation of a large portion of our fellow-creatures, then God intended it to take place, and resistance to it is opposition to his will. What a strange reason for oppressing a race of fellow-beings, that, if we restore them to their rights, we shall marry them !

I proceed to the last objection to Emancipation. We are told, that it will stir up the two races to a war, which nothing but the slavery or extermination of one or the other will end. We have often heard of the "fears of the brave," so that we ought not, perhaps, to wonder at the alarm here expressed. And yet, we are somewhat surprised, that "the chivalry of the South," should see in the colored man a formidable foe, and should be willing to put forth their fears as a defence of their injustice. Superior as the slaveholders are in number, holding all the property and civil power, distinguished by education, by skill in arms, and by singular daring, and backed by the whole power of the free States, can they seriously dread collisions ? All our fear here is, that the colored man, though freed, will remain a slave, will be crushed by the lordly spirit, the high bearing of the white race ; that he will not for a long time rise to a just self-respect. We fear, that, in a country, where the law of honor and Lynch law are rife, he cannot enjoy that equality before the civil laws, to which freedom will give him a nominal claim. We fear, that, among a people, who take the protection of their persons and character into their own hands, and shoot down the man who offers an insult, the poor colored race, whose assertion of rights will easily be construed into insolence, will be very slow to insist on their due. That they should gain the ascendancy, without some miraculous combination of circumstances, is impossible. Were they a fierce, savage, indomitable race, they might be looked on with apprehension ; but they are the most inoffensive people on

earth ; and their mildness has undoubtedly perpetuated their chains. With emancipation their present rapid increase will be checked, for the motives to breed them will cease. With liberty of motion, the desire of change of place will spring up ; they will naturally be more or less dispersed ; the danger of concentration on a few spots will diminish ; and when we think of the vast extent of our country, we may expect them to become a sprinkling through our population, incapable, even if desirous, of disturbing the public peace. Especially the discontented, bold, and adventurous, the very spirits from which turbulence might be feared, will be attracted by hope and novelty, as well as driven by inward restlessness, to new scenes. In truth, can we conceive of a country, which has so little to dread from emancipation as this, reaching as it does from ocean to ocean, and destined to receive increasing accessions to its numbers from the old world ? It is also worthy of note, that the characteristics of the colored race are particularly fitted to keep them harmless. I refer to their passion for imitation of their superiors, and to their love of show and fashion, which tend to attach them more to the white race than to their own, and to break them up into different ranks or castes among themselves.

The groundlessness of fears from Emancipation is becoming more apparent from the experiment of the West Indies. I do not speak of this as decided ; but its first fruits surpass all expectation. The slaves in those islands were to their masters in the proportion of eight or ten to one, and they are shut up in narrow islands, which prevent dispersion ; and yet, the gift of freedom has not provoked an act of violence. Their new liberty has been followed by a degree of order unknown before ; and, what makes this peaceful transition more striking is, that emancipation took place under every possible disadvantage. It was not the free gift of the master, not an act of justice and kind-



ness, not accompanied with appeals to the gratitude and better nature of the slave. It was conferred by a distant benefactor ; it was forced on the planter. It was submitted to with predictions of its ruinous results. The generous hope, which so often creates the good it pants for, was wanting. In Jamaica, it would seem, that the furious opposition of the planting interest to the measure, broke out, in some instances, into a desire of its defeat. Yet under all these disadvantages, which can never occur here, because emancipation here must be a free gift, the prospects of a successful issue are brighter than had dawned on any but the most ardent spirits. The failure of such an experiment would not have discouraged me. What ought not to be hoped from its success ?

Mr. Clay seems particularly to dread immediate emancipation. But this, in the common acceptation of the words, is not the only way of giving freedom. Let the wisdom of the South engage in this cause heartily, and in good faith, and it is reasonable to expect, that means of a safe transition to freedom, not dreamed of now, would be devised. This work we have no desire to take out of the master's hands, nor would we thrust on him our plans for adoption. I indeed think, that emancipation, in one sense of the phrase, should be immediate ; that is, the right of property in a human being should be immediately disclaimed. But though private ownership should cease, the State would be authorized and bound to provide for its own safety. The legislature may place the colored race under guardianship, may impose such restraints as the public order shall require, and may postpone the full enjoyment of personal liberty even to the next generation. There was a time, when these safeguards seemed to me needful. Happily the West Indies are teaching, and, I trust, will continue to teach, that immediate emancipation, in the full sense of the words, is safer than a gradual loosening of the chain.

Let me close this head with one remark. Allow what is not true ; allow emancipation to be dangerous. Will it be safer hereafter, than at the present moment ? Will it be safer when the slaves shall have doubled, trebled, or still more increased ? And must it not at length come ? Can any man, who considers the chances of war, and the direction which opinion is taking in the civilized world, believe, that slavery is to be perpetual ? Is it wise to wink out of sight a continually increasing peril ? At this moment, what possible danger is to be feared from emancipation in the northern slave States ? Does not every Kentuckian *know*, that slavery can be ended now, without the slightest hazard to social order ? Does not the whole danger, as to that State, lie in delay ? How, then, can danger be an excuse for refusing emancipation ?

Having thus reviewed the common objections to emancipation, I pass to one more topic, which is referred to in Mr. Clay's speech, and which is the burden of many passionate appeals from the South. I have in view the objections, which are made to the agitation of the question of slavery at the North. These are chiefly two, that such discussion may excite insurrection among the slaves ; and, that it threatens to dissolve the Union.

In regard to the first, the danger of insurrection, I have shown how I view it by continuing to write on the subject of slavery. Could I discover even a slight ground for apprehending such a result, I would not write. Nothing would tempt me to take the hazard of stirring up a servile war. Bad as slavery is, massacre is far worse. In the present case, words of truth and good will are the only weapons for a Christian to fight with. A mysterious and adorable providence permits and controls massacre, war, and the rage of savage men, for the subversion of corrupt institutions, just as it purifies the tainted atmos-

phere by storms and lightnings. But man is not trusted with these awful powers ; and let not philanthropy be disheartened, because not permitted to reform the world by the sudden processes of violence and bloodshed. Moral influences are the surest and most enduring, and good men part with their strength in resorting to other means.

I have known too much of slavery, of the spirit of its victims, of the restraints under which they live, and of the master's power, to dread the stirring up of insurrections. On this point, persons, who have not visited slave countries fall into great errors. Not long ago, a speech was made in Boston, in which the slaves were compared to wild beasts, thirsting for blood ; and the good people were told, that the master locks his doors at night, not knowing, but that in the morning he shall find the throats of wife and children cut from ear to ear ; and there were found among us some, who, in the simplicity of their hearts, believed the tale. One would have thought, that, in hearing the fearful story, they would have asked themselves, how it happens, that our Southern brethren give five hundred or a thousand dollars for one of these beasts of prey ; how it is, that they are anxious to fill their houses and plantations, and surround their wives and children with assassins. Human nature, if this account be true, is a different thing at the South from what it is at the North. Here we should go mad, and should lose life as well as reason, if the murderous blade were glaring before our eyes night and day ; and still more, we should be most grateful to our neighbours, who should be anxious to free us from the curse, instead of rejecting their "meddling interference" with threats and execrations. But among the hearers of the speech referred to, there seemed not a few, to whom these difficulties did not recur. They even forgot to inquire, how the fearful account was to be reconciled with the assurances from the South of the happiness of the slave

and the blessings of the institution ; and, in their sympathy with the South, they frowned fiercely enough on such of us, as, by our writings, are stirring up the colored race to murder. To tranquillize these compassionate people, I will tell them, that the picture, which terrified them, was a work of fancy. There is no such terror in slaveholding countries. In my long residences among slaves, I have used fewer precautions at night than in this good city. I have slept in one place with open doors, and in another have given to a slave the key to lock the house at the hour of retiring and to reopen it in the morning, when I have been the sole tenant of the dwelling. Undoubtedly the slaveholder wears arms, just as we bolt our doors and appoint patrols of watchmen in the streets ; but in both cases, these and other means of defence bring such security, that sleep is undisturbed by fear. The slaves, broken from birth to submission, brought up in ignorance, confined to the plantation, having no means of external concert, wanting mutual confidence, because wanting principle, and separated by the distinction of house servants and field laborers, cower before their instructed, armed, united, organized masters, and feel resistance to be vain. Add to this the strong attachment, by which some on almost every estate are bound to their owners, stronger than what they bear to their own race ; and we shall see, that the danger of a servile war is not great enough to embitter life, or deserve much sympathy.

Rome had servile wars ; but her slaves had been free-men. Among them were fierce barbarians, whose native wildernesses had infused an indomitable love of liberty ; and there were civilized men, who groaned in spirit and gnashed their teeth at the degrading, intolerable yoke, which was crushing them. But in this country there are no materials for servile war, at least in times of peace. In war, indeed, whether civil or foreign, an army marching with "Emancipation" on its banner might stir up the

palsied spirit of the oppressed to terrible retribution for their wrongs. But very little is to be feared in ordinary times. Were the slave more dangerous, I should feel less for his yoke. Were a greater portion of the spirit of a man left him, I should not think him so wronged. But what is to be feared from a man, who stands by and sees wife and child lacerated without cause, and is driven by no impulse to interpose for their defence. The strongest sensibilities of nature cannot sting him, to do for his child what the hen does for her chicken, or the trembling hare for her young.

The slave, as far as I have known him, is not a being to be feared. The iron has eaten into his soul, and this is worse than eating into the flesh. The tidings, that there are people here who would set him free, will do little harm. He withstands a far greater temptation than this ; I mean, the presence of the free negro. One would think, that the sight of his own race enjoying liberty, would, if any thing, stir him up to the assertion of his rights ; but it fails. Liberty is a word, not indeed to be heard without awakening desire ; but it rouses no resistance. The colonizationist holds out to the slaves an elysium, where they are to be free, and rich, and happy, and a great people ; thus teaching them, that there is nothing in their nature, which forbids them the enjoyment of all human rights ; and the master, so far from dreading the doctrines of this society, will become its President. No. Slavery has done its work ; has broken the spirit. So little is the slave inclined to violence, that it is affirmed, and I presume truly, that there are fewer murders by their hands, than by an equal number of white men at the North. We hear, indeed, of atrocious deeds, assassinations, bloody combats at the South. But these are the deeds of white men. Pistols and Bowie knives are not worn by the colored race. Slavery produces horrible, multiplied murders at the South,



not by infusing rage, revenge into the man who bears the yoke, but by nursing proud, unforgiving, bloodthirsty propensities in the master.

Undoubtedly there are exposures to massacre in slave countries, as there are to mobs, partial insurrections in all countries. But outbreaks at the South will be found, perhaps always, to have their cause in local circumstances, not in influences from abroad. I do not say, that there is no danger in slavery. Systems founded in wrong want stability, and are every day growing more and more insecure, with the progress of intelligence and moral sentiment in the world. Unexpected explosions may take place at the South. Secret causes may be at work on the spirit of the slave. Foreign invasion would be a death-blow to the system. I mean only to say, that there is no danger from the discussion of slavery at the North, or only that indirect, distant danger, which we are always encountering, and which no man thinks of flying from, in human affairs. The stormiest day of abolitionism has passed, and yet not a symptom of insurrection has appeared at the South. It is morally impossible, that there should be danger in the calmer days which are to follow.

I now proceed to the second objection to the agitation of slavery at the North. We are told, that the Union will be thus endangered. "Danger to the Union" is so old a cry, that it ceases to startle you or myself; and yet so much sensitiveness to it remains, that the topic ought not to be lightly dismissed. And I begin with saying, that were the Union as weak as these clamors suppose, were it capable of being dissolved by any of the hundred causes, which are said to threaten it, then it would not be worth the keeping. The bonds, which hold a nation together, if not exceedingly strong, are of no use. They will snap in the hour of need. But our Union is not so weak, as our alarmists imagine. It has stood many storms, and will

stand many more. It is not, as many think, a creature of a day. Its foundations were laid at the first settlement of these States, and their whole history was silently preparing them to become one great people. There is not a community on earth, which has so distinct a conviction of the blessings of national union, and of the evils of separation, as this country ; and, in the present age of the world, such a conviction may avail almost or quite as much as the traditional prejudices and habits of other nations. Then our Union does not rest only on the clear perception of the good it confers. It rests on sentiment as well as interest, and on a higher sentiment than binds any other people. We are charged, I know, with being given to boasting ; but this reproach must not deter me from speaking of the deep foundation of our Union in the claims of our country on our love and reverence. No other people can look back to such founders as we. No other people has done as much in an equal time for civilization and freedom. Two hundred years have hardly passed over us, and we have redeemed from savage wildness a realm, compared with which European kingdoms are dwarfed into provinces ; and, through every period of our history, we have been pressing forwards to an equality of rights and a freedom of institutions, nowhere else known in past or present times. The deliberate construction of a civil polity, in which the idea of liberty is realized to a degree not dreamed of in other countries, is one of the grandest achievements of history. Other governments, the creatures of chance, and obstructed by abuses of barbarous times, bear no such testimony to the energy and elevation of the public mind. Through this clear, bright, practical developement of the principle of liberty, these United States, an infant country, growing up in a distant wilderness, have moved and quickened the civilized world. This country has been called by Providence to a twofold work, to spread

civilization over a new continent, and to give a new impulse to the cause of human rights and freedom. A higher destiny has been granted to no people ; and, with all our imperfections, (exceedingly great I acknowledge,) we have accomplished our task with a force of thought and will unsurpassed in human history. Add to this, that we have produced what no other country can boast of, a spotless revolutionary leader, a chief, who, in a season of storm and civil strife, amidst unbounded popularity, amidst the temptations of severe hardship and of brilliant success, never, in a single instance, grasped at power, forgot his duty to his country, or wavered in his loyalty to freedom. In one form of greatness, we feel ourselves unrivalled. The annals of no people furnish a patriot and friend of liberty, so pure, so disinterested as Washington. That a people having such a history, should be bound by sentiment to the national Union, is a necessary result of the laws of human nature ; and accordingly, the people, as far as I know them, are, on this point, of one heart and one mind.

But, besides this generous sentiment, we have characteristic feelings, as a people, which bind us together. One of our national passions is pride in a vast extent of territory. From the circumstance of our history and location, we are accustomed to think and talk of immense regions, and to scour remote tracts of sea and land ; and we should experience a sense of confinement in the boundaries which satisfy other states. An American has a passion for belonging to a great country. A witty foreigner observed of the city of Washington, that it had one merit if no other ; it was a city of "magnificent distances." For this kind of magnificence our people have a decided taste. We look with something like scorn on the kingdoms of the old world ; and our mother country seems to us but a speck on the ocean. We travel a distance equal to the whole length of Great Britain in two days or less, and feel

as if we had but begun our journey. Our great men desire to connect their names with this vast country ; and humble individuals, whether wisely or not, derive from it a feeling of importance. The poor man, in voting, feels that he is exercising, in part, the sovereignty of an immense realm. There is more of the imagination, than of the heart, in the sentiment now unfolded, but it is real, and it is no frail bond of national union.

Another cause of Union may appear to foreigners less serious than it really is. We hold together, because we know not where to break off. Neighbouring States are too much allied in feelings and interests and domestic bonds for separation, and no State is willing to occupy the position of a frontier.

Our union is every day gaining strength by the increased facilities of intercourse, which place distant parts of the country side by side, and are interweaving almost as closely the interests and affections of remote States, as of those which border on each other. The subtle steam, made up of mutually repelling particles, and melting in a moment into air, has become to this country a cord stronger than adamant. Providence seems to intend to give us the physical means of binding together a wider region, than was ever before blessed with one beneficent sway.

It also deserves attention, that the cause, which has hitherto chiefly disturbed our Union, is diminishing, if it has not passed away. I refer to the disposition of the national legislature to interfere with local interests, or to extend itself beyond the bounds of strict necessity ; thus awakening the jealousy of different sections, and giving them the notion of separate interests. This disposition is yielding, not only to the resistance of different States, but to an impossibility of its exercise founded on the nature of free institutions. Under these, government is a slowly

moving machine. Its wheels seem to be clogged more and more. Diversities of interests, collisions of passion, party-spirit, and endless varieties of opinion, throw almost insuperable obstacles in the way of legislation. Congress, after a long session, separates, having hardly passed laws enough to keep the government in operation. All free States, at home and abroad, feel this difficulty ; and, evil as it seems, it has no small advantages. It abates that worse nuisance, excess of legislation. By this cause, Congress is compelled to keep itself within its bounds ; for in these it finds more work than it can do. The government must be in reality, what it is in name, General, and must be as simple as consists with public safety ; and, thus qualified, why may it not hold together a mighty realm ?

Foreigners expect disunion from the extent of our territory, but in this we see safety, as well as danger ; for it not only flatters, as we have seen, the national pride, but multiplies the bonds of mutual interest, renders free exchange of productions and friendly intercourse vastly more profitable, and, at the same time, checks that despotic power of party leaders, those simultaneous excitements, those passionate movements, that concentration of all the energies and feelings of the people on a single point of controversy, by which free States of narrower dimensions are convulsed.

From these remarks it will be seen, that I partake little of the nervous sensitiveness of a portion of the people, on the subject of the Union. Undoubtedly, it is exposed to perils, which may turn these hopes and prophecies into illusions. The experience of life teaches us to be prepared for the worst. Our present prosperity seems too unparalleled to endure. But loose, vague fears, ought not to disturb us ; nor should they be propagated, because they often serve to fulfil themselves. The truth is, that we are a people singularly



given to alarm, and very much on the ground, on which the rich fear most about property. The greatness of our blessings makes us timid. As far as my knowledge of this community extends, the Union is most dear. It may be said of this, as of other social ties, that its strength cannot be fully known, till we are seriously called to dissolve it.

But, it is said, the South is passionate, and threatens to secede, if we agitate this subject of slavery. Is this no cause of alarm? To this argument I would offer two answers. First, the South, passionate as it may be, is not insane. Does not the South know, that, in abandoning us on the ground of slavery, it would take the surest step towards converting the free States to intense and overwhelming abolitionism? Would not slavery become from that moment the grand distinctive idea of the Southern Republic? And would not its Northern rival, by instinct and necessity, found itself on the antagonist principle? In such an event, there would be no need of anti-slavery societies, of abolition agitations, to convert the North. The blow that would sever the Union for this cause, would produce an instantaneous explosion to shake the whole land. The moral sentiment against slavery, now kept down by the interests and duties which grow out of union, would burst its fetters, and be reinforced by the whole strength of the patriotic principle, as well as by all the prejudices and local passions which would follow disunion. Does not the South see that our exemption from the taint of slavery, would, in this case, become our main boast? That we should cast the reproach of this institution into her teeth, in very different language from what is now used? That what is now tolerated in sister States, would be intensely hated in separate, rival communities? Let disunion on this ground take place, and then the North may become truly dangerous to the South. Then, real incendiaries, very different from those who now bear the name, might spring

up among us. Then, fanaticism would borrow force and protection from national feeling. Then, in the unfriendly relations between the two communities, which would soon be created, and in the self-regarding policy which we should adopt, we should take into account the weakness which a servile population would bring on our adversaries. We should feel, that we have an ally in our rival's bosom, nor would that ally forget to look Northward for liberation. I say the South is not insane. Nothing but a palpable necessity could induce it to break off from the free States on the ground of slavery.

This leads me to observe in the next place, that there is, and can be, no kind of necessity or warrant for separation furnished to the South, by the discussion of slavery at the North. This topic will indeed be agitated, and more and more freely ; but no discussion, no agitation of slavery, no form of abolition, can produce such an excitement on the subject in the free States, as will furnish the slave States with any motive to encounter the terrible evils of separation. This subject deserves some consideration. Abolitionism may be viewed in two lights ; first, as the organized array of societies against slavery ; and next, as an individual sentiment, scattered through the whole population. In neither view, can it drive the South to disunion, at least for a long time to come. Regarded as an organized body, Abolitionism will subsist and will influence opinion, but it will never gain an ascendancy in the free States. On this point my mind has never wavered. It nowhere carries with it the mass of the people, or the weight of opinion. It has brought no religious or political body under its influence. Fashion, wealth, sectarian prejudice, and political ambition, are, for the most part, opposed to it. That the South should be driven by it to desperation, is impossible. Many of the obstacles to the ascendancy of this first form of Abolitionism will naturally be presented in my views of

the second. I will here only observe, that, with the intelligence and state of feeling prevalent at the North, public opinion cannot be determined by associations, especially by one which takes Agitation for its motto. Agitation may be useful, in producing a speedy movement in favor of an object of clear utility, and about which opinions do not greatly differ. For example, in the case of Temperance, where men are generally of one mind, where opinion is fixed, where excitement is the great object to be accomplished, where men are to be roused to resist habits which they know to be wrong ; in such a case, an array of numbers, a system of pledges, and multiplied public meetings, may do good. But, on a subject involving many practical difficulties and solemn consequences, and coming, as many think, into collision with great public interests, agitation will not now avail. Men distrust it, fear it, and resent as a wrong, the violence with which the opinions of zealous men are forced on the community. Agitation may carry such a country as Ireland, where the people, besides being ignorant, are all inflamed with one sense of wrong, and every heart responds to the Agitator's cry. So it carried the British act of Emancipation, for the nation was ripe for action, and, for the most part, had no hostile prejudices to surrender. But an intelligent people, divided in opinion and feeling on a great subject, cannot be carried by storm, or be swept away by a fervent association. The ardent advocates, even of a good cause, if marshalled into an army, and joined in vehement onset on the prejudices of such a community, cannot but awaken re-action and obstinate repulsion ; and will, too often, put themselves in the wrong by passionate movements, of which the foe is sure to profit. I now speak of associated agitation. Let the individual enthusiast, who acts from his own soul, agitate as much as he will. I would not say a word to stifle the full, bursting heart. But premeditated, organized agitation, is another

thing. Besides the difficulty already stated, it is apt to degenerate into noise and show, and to fall under suspicion of pretence, and, on this account, is less forgiven for what is deemed excess. I see, therefore, very serious obstacles to the triumphs of organized Abolitionism in a community like ours. It has, indeed, done good. Under all its disadvantages, it has roused many minds, but it cannot carry with it the people.

As to Abolitionism in its more general form, or regarded as an individual principle of settled, earnest opposition to slavery, this has taken deep root, and must grow and triumph. It is in harmony with our institutions, and with all the tendencies of modern civilization. It triumphs in Europe, and will flow in upon us from abroad more and more freely, in consequence of those improvements of intercourse which place Europe almost at our door. Still, it is far from being universal among us. There are obstacles as well as aids to its progress, in consequence of which, it is to make its way calmly, gradually, so that there is no possibility of any violent action from the freest discussion of slavery. There is no danger of an anti-slavery fever here, which will justify the South to itself in encountering the infinite hazards of disunion.

The prevalent state of feeling in the free States in regard to slavery is, indifference ; an indifference strengthened by the notion of great difficulties attending the subject. The fact is painful, but the truth should be spoken. The majority of the people, even yet, care little about the matter. A painful proof of this insensibility was furnished about a year and a half ago, when the English West Indies were emancipated. An event surpassing this in moral grandeur, is not recorded in history. In one day, half a million, probably seven hundred thousand of human beings, were rescued from bondage, to full, unqualified freedom. The consciousness of wrongs, in so many breasts, was ex-

changed into rapturous, grateful joy. What shouts of thanksgiving broke forth from those liberated crowds ! What new sanctity and strength were added to the domestic ties ! What new hopes opened on future generations ! The crowning glory of this day was the fact, that the work of emancipation was wholly due to the principles of Christianity. The West Indies were freed, not by force, or human policy, but by the reverence of a great people for justice and humanity. The men, who began and carried on this cause, were Christian philanthropists ; and they prevailed by spreading their own spirit through a nation. In this respect, the emancipation of the West Indies was a grander work than the redemption of the Israelites from bondage. This was accomplished by force, by outward miracles, by the violence of the elements. That was achieved by love, by moral power, by God, working not in the stormy seas, but in the depths of the human heart. And how was this day of Emancipation, one of the most blessed days which ever dawned on the earth, received in this country ? Whilst in distant England a thrill of gratitude and joy pervaded thousands and millions, we, the neighbours of the West Indies, and who boast of our love of liberty, saw the sun of that day rise and set, with hardly a thought of the scenes on which it was pouring its joyful light. The greatest part of our newspapers did not refer to the event. The great majority of the people had forgotten it. Such was the testimony we gave to our concern for the poor slave ; and is it from discussions of slavery among such a people that the country is to be overturned ?

It will undoubtedly be said, that our uncertainty as to the issues of West Indian Emancipation, prevented our rejoicing in it. But does uncertainty so act, where the heart is deeply moved ? Is it a part of human nature to wait for assurance, before it exults at events, in which its affections are involved ? Does the new-born child receive



no welcome, because we are not sure of the prosperity of his future years ? Does the lover of freedom give no salutation, no benediction, to a people rising in defence of rights, or establishing free institutions, because the experiment of liberty may fail ? Undoubtedly there were evils to be apprehended from West Indian emancipation ; for when was a great social revolution ever accomplished, or a great abuse ever removed, without them ? It was impossible for the slave and the master to change their old relations, to reorganize society, without continuing to feel more or less the influences of the old system of oppression. Are the wounds of ages to be healed in a moment ? Could a perfect social order be expected to rise from the ruins of slavery ? But must corrupt systems be made perpetual, because of the chances of reform ? In the case of the West India emancipation, we had more pledges of success than are usually given. We knew that the trial of liberty had been made in Antigua, without the occurrence of any of the evils which had been dreaded. The great transition from slavery to freedom had taken place in a day without disorder, without the slightest injury to property or life, with no excitement but overwhelming gratitude. Yet, as a people, we cared nothing for the liberation of the West Indian slave. With the exception of a few voices, the mighty chorus of praise to God, which ascended from the Gulf of Mexico and from Great Britian, found no response here.

This indifference to slavery has foundations among us, which are not to be removed in a day. One cause is to be found in the all-devouring passion for gain, accumulation, which leaves little leisure for sympathy with any suffering which does not meet our eye, and which will listen to no innovations, by which the old channels of trade and profit may be obstructed. Another cause is to be found in the sympathies of what are called the higher and more refined

classes here, with the like classes at the South. The tide of fashion, no unimportant influence even in a republic, sets strongly against anti-slavery efforts. Another cause is, our position in regard to the colored race. In Europe, the negro is known chiefly by report, and is, therefore, easily recognised as a man. His humanity is never questioned. Still more, he is an object for the imagination and the heart. He is known only as a wronged, suffering man. He is almost a picturesque being. Thousands and thousands in England, at the mention of the African slave, immediately recall to their minds the most affecting figure of the negro, as Darwin portrayed him, touching the earth with one knee, lifting up his chained hands, and exclaiming, "Am I not a man and a brother?" To us, the negro is no creature of imagination. We see him as he is. There is nothing picturesque in his lot. On visiting the slave States, we see him practically ranked with inferior creatures, and taking the rank submissively. We hear from him shouts of boisterous laughter, much oftener than sighs or groans; and this laughter repels compassion, whilst it inspires something like contempt. We here have a hard task to perform. We have to conquer old and deep prejudices, and to see a true man in one, with whom we have associated ideas of degradation inconsistent with humanity. These are painful truths; but it is good to know the truth. One thing is plain, that free discussion of slavery is not likely to stir up in the free States, rash, careless assaults on the institutions of the South, and so to endanger the Union. We who are called incendiaries, because we discuss this subject, do not kindle our fires among dry woods, but too often on fields of ice. A consuming conflagration is not to be feared.

I have now considered the objections to the free discussion of slavery at the North. This discussion is safe; still more, it is a duty, and must go on; and, under this and

other influences, the anti-slavery spirit must spread and must prevail. Mr. Clay's speech will but aid the movement. The anti-slavery spirit may triumph slowly, but triumph it must and will. It may be thought, that, from my own showing, the success of this cause is not so sure as its friends are accustomed to boast. But, notwithstanding all the obstacles which I have frankly stated, anti-slavery principles have made great progress, have become deep convictions in many souls, within a few years; and the impulse, far from being spent, continually gains strength. There are those who hope that the present movement is a temporary fanaticism. We are even told, that a distinguished Senator from the South, on the close of Mr. Clay's speech, repaid this effort for slavery with unbounded applause, and declared, that "Abolitionism was now down." But such men have not studied our times. Strange, that in an age, when great principles are stirring the human soul, and when the mass of men, who have hitherto slept, are waking up to thought, it should be imagined, that an individual, a name, a breath, can arrest the grand forward movements of society. When will statesmen learn, that there are higher powers than political motives, interests, and intrigues? When will they learn the might which dwells in truth? When will they learn, that the great moral and religious Ideas, which have now seized on and are working in men's souls, are the most efficient, durable forces, which are acting in the world? When will they learn, that the past and present are not the future, but that the changes already wrought in society, are only forerunners, signs, and springs of mightier revolutions. Politicians, absorbed in near objects, are prophets only on a small scale. They may foretell the issues of the next election, though even here they are often baffled; but the breaking out of a deep moral conviction in the mass of men, is a mystery which they have little skill to interpret.

The future of this country is to take its shape, not from the growing of cotton at the South, not from the struggles of parties or leaders for power or station ; but from the great principles which are unfolding themselves silently, in men's breasts. There is here, and through the civilized world, a steady current of thought and feeling in one direction. The old notion of the subjection of the many, for the comfort, ease, pleasure, and pride of the few, is fast wearing away. A far higher, and more rational conception of freedom, than entered into the loftiest speculations of ancient times, is spreading itself, and is changing the face of society. " Equality before the laws," has become the watchword of all civilized states. The absolute worth of a human being is better understood, that is, his worth as an individual, or on his own account, and not merely as a useful tool to others. Christianity is more and more seen to attach a sacredness and unspeakable dignity to every man, because each man is immortal. Such is the current of human thought. Principles of a higher order are beginning to operate on society, and the dawn of these primal, everlasting lights, is a sure omen of a brighter day. This is the true sign of the coming ages. Politicians, seizing on the narrow, selfish principles of human nature, expect these to rule for ever. They hope, by their own machinery, to determine the movements of the world. But if history teaches any lesson, it is the impotence of statesmen ; and, happily, this impotence is increasing every day, with the spread of lights and moral force among the people. Would politicians study history with more care, they might learn, even from the dark times which are past, that interest is not, after all, the mightiest agent in human affairs ; that the course of human events has been more determined, on the whole, by great principles, by great emotions, by feeling, by enthusiasm, than by selfish calculations, or by selfish men. In the great conflict between the Oriental and the Western World, which

was decided at Thermopylæ and Marathon; in the last great conflict between Polytheism and Theism, begun by Jesus Christ, and carried on by his followers; in the Reformation of Luther; in the American Revolution; in these grandest epochs of history, what was it which won the victory? What were the mighty, all-prevailing powers? Not political management, not self-interest, not the lower principles of human nature; but the principles of freedom and religion, moral power, moral enthusiasm, the divine aspirations of the human soul. Great thoughts and great emotions have a place in human history, which no historian has hitherto given them, and the future is to be more determined by these, than the past. The anti-slavery spirit is not then to die under the breath of an orator. As easily might that breath blow out the sun.

Slavery must fall, because it stands in direct hostility to all the grand movements, principles, and reforms of our age, because it stands in the way of an advancing world. One great idea stands out amidst the discoveries and improvements of modern times. It is, that man is not to exercise arbitrary, irresponsible power, over man. To restrain power, to divide and balance it, to create responsibility for its just use, to secure the individual against its abuse, to substitute law for private will, to shield the weak from the strong, to give to the injured the means of redress, to set a fence round every man's property and rights, in a word, to secure liberty, — such, under various expressions, is the great object on which philosophers, patriots, philanthropists, have long fixed their thoughts and hopes. It is remarkable, and one of the happy omens of the times, that even absolute governments have reached, in a measure, this grand Idea. They present themselves as the guardians of liberty. They profess their desire and purpose to sustain equal laws, under which all men, from the highest to the lowest, shall find effectual protection for their rights. The



distinguished Prussian historian, Raumer, in his letters on England, maintains, that his own government, which foreigners call despotic, does not rest on private will, and that it ensures, on the whole, greater freedom to the subject, than the British people can boast. Thus despotism does homage to the great ideas and spirit of our times ; and yet in the midst of this progress, in the face of this universal reverence for human rights, the slaveholder stands apart, and sets up his claim to ownership of his fellow-creatures, and insists on arbitrary, irresponsible rule, and makes his will a law, and enforces it by degrading punishments. And can this power stand ? Is it able to resist the moral power of the world ? Can it withstand a higher power, that of Eternal Justice, before which all worlds bow, and to which the highest orders of beings must give account ?

I have now finished my remarks on the topics suggested by Mr. Clay's speech. I began them with stating, that I should avoid, as much as possible, all personalities ; and I have aimed throughout to look only at the system, not at individuals. I am aware, however, that some of my remarks must seem to have a very unfavorable bearing on the slaveholder ; for how can the evils and crimes of a system be held up, without implicating more or less those who sustain it ? To prevent then all misapprehension, I wish to say, that whilst I think slaveholders in general highly culpable for upholding a system of wrong, which has been so plainly exposed, I do not regard slaveholding as a proof of the necessary absence of moral and religious principle. Our nature is strangely inconsistent, and experience continually teaches us, that faults and sins, on which the eye of conscience has not been distinctly turned, may consist with real virtue. A man, living in a community, all of whose members join in passionate support of an evil institution, must have an energy of thought, a moral force, a moral independence which few can boast, in order to see

and resist and renounce the wrong. No moral trial on earth is perhaps so overpowering. The light, which prevails in other regions, enters most slowly this compact, dense mass of moral error. I cannot forget this in judging the slaveholder. I remember, too, that he is not merely a slaveholder. He sustains the natural, innocent, purifying relations of domestic life, of private friendship, of country, and of Christian worship, and in these he may be exemplary ; in these, there are woman at the South eminently faithful. I know it is said, that in these acknowledgments I weaken my testimony against slavery ; but truth is dearer than policy. I cannot hold it back. Could I liberate all the slaves, by misrepresenting the slaveholder, I would not do it. The primary work of a man is, not to liberate slaves, but to be just, to render to all their due, to do what is right, be the cost what it may ; and all benevolent enterprises, which have not their origin and rule in this sovereign principle of duty, are "splendid sins." The slaveholders commit a great wrong, many without consciousness of the wrong, and many with entire indifference to the moral character of slaveholding. And in all this they resemble other societies of men here and abroad. There is much unconscious wrong doing, and, still more, much conscious sacrifice of right to interest, all the world over. This should not prevent rebuke of other communities ; but should check invidious comparison, and the spirit of self-exaltation. We of the North have reason and are bound to condemn the enormous wrongs practised at the South ; but have we a right to boast of ourselves as better than our neighbours ? Is not the selfish spirit of gain, which is blinding multitudes at the South to the injustice of slavery, very rife here ? Were this institution rooted here, should we not cling as a people to it, as obstinately as others ? Are none of us now reconciled to it by the profits it affords them ? England reproaches our slavery, and she cannot do it too solemnly.

But has England a right to boast over the slaveholder ? Who can fathom the depths of guilt and woe in that rich, prosperous island ? Is there another spot on earth, in which so many crimes and agonies are accumulated, as in London ? Where else on earth is so shocking a contrast to be seen of boundless luxury, and unutterable wretchedness ? What a work has philanthropy to do for the ignorant, intemperate, half-famished crowds of Ireland and Great Britain ! Her nobles and merchants, indeed, scatter their thousands and ten thousands among the poor. But do they retrench one indulgence or one ostentatious display, or resolutely meet the great question, how the terrible evils which weigh down and threaten society are to be substantially redressed ? I say not these things in the spirit of retaliation towards England. I ask from her just indignant remonstrance against our wrong doing. But I would show, that, in assailing slavery, I am not blind to all other evils, that I mean not to set apart the slaveholder as alone deserving rebuke, and that I acknowledge the justice of many of his reproofs of these free States and of Europe. God alone knows the chief offender. The slaveholder indeed is chargeable with the peculiar guilt of ordaining, and upholding with set purpose, a system of enormous injustice. Slavery is a creature of human will and choice, and at the same time the greatest wrong and insult on human nature. I therefore cry aloud against it. Of the individuals who defend and perpetuate the system, I am sure, that the best are deeply injured by it ; but among them, there are better than myself. I do not fix their rank in a world of transgressors. I desire to lift up the wronged and oppressed. I leave to a higher Judge, the heart, the sins, the virtues of the oppressor.

I have now concluded my remarks on the topics suggested by Mr. Clay's Speech ; and here you may expect me to close this long communication. But believing, as I do,

that my engagements and duties will not allow me to write again on slavery, I am inclined to relieve my mind of all its burdens on this subject. Allow me then to say a few words on a topic, which has given me many painful thoughts, the more painful, because so few have seemed to share my feelings. I refer to that gross outrage on rights and liberty, the burning of the Hall of Freedom in Philadelphia. I have felt this the more, because this Hall was erected for free discussion, was dedicated to Liberty of Speech. Undoubtedly it was especially designed to give the Abolitionists a chance of being heard ; but it was also intended to give the same privilege to others, who, in consequence of having adopted unpopular opinions, might be excluded from the places commonly devoted to public meetings. This building was associated with the dearest right of an intelligent, spiritual being, that of communicating thought and receiving such communication in return ; more intimately associated with it than any other edifice in the country. And this was stormed by a mob ; a peaceful assemblage was driven from its walls ; and afterwards it was levelled to the earth by fire.

Various circumstances conspired to take this out of the class of common crimes. It was not the act of the coarse, passionate multitude. It was not done in a transport of fury. The incendiaries proceeded leisurely in their work, and distinctly understood, that they were executing the wish and purpose of a great majority of the people. Passionate outbreaks may be forgiven. An act performed by the reckless few does not alarm us, because we know that a moral force subsists in the community to counteract it. But when individuals, to whom we look for a restraining moral power, undertake deliberately the work of the reckless and violent, then the outrage on law and right wears a singularly dark and menacing aspect. Such a community may well feel the foundations of social order tottering beneath them.

After the mob of Philadelphia, who wonders at the mob of Harrisburg ?

Another aggravation of this act was, that the blameless character of those who had erected and were occupying the Hall of Freedom, was distinctly understood. The assemblage thronging this edifice, was not made up of profligates, of the false, the lawless, the profane. On that occasion were met together citizens of Philadelphia and visitors from other cities and States, who were second to none in purity of life; and they had convened in obedience to what they believed, however erroneously, the will of God, and to accomplish what seemed to them a great work of justice and humanity. I doubt whether, at that hour, there were collected in any other single spot of the land so many good and upright men and women, so many sincere friends of the race. In that crowd was John G. Whittier, a man whose genius and virtues would do honor to any city, whose poetry bursts from the soul with the fire and indignant energy of an ancient prophet, and whose noble simplicity of character is said to be the delight of all who know him. In that crowd was Lucretia Mott, that beautiful example of womanhood. Who that has heard the tones of her voice, and looked on the mild radiance of her benign and intelligent countenance, can endure the thought, that such a woman was driven by a mob, from a spot to which she had gone, as she religiously believed, on a mission of Christian sympathy ? There were many others, worthy associates of those whom I have named, religious men, prepared to suffer in the cause of humanity, devoted women, whose hearts were burdened with the infinite indignities heaped on their sex by slavery. Such were the people, who were denied the protection of the laws; denied the privilege granted to the most profligate political party, and even to a meeting of Atheists; treated as outcasts, as the refuse and offscouring of the world. In them was revived



the experience of the first witnesses to the Christian faith. Happily Christianity has not wholly failed to improve society. At first, the disciple himself was destroyed; now only his edifice; and this is certainly some progress of the world.

And what was the mighty cause of this outrage? A general reply is, that the Abolitionists were fanatics. Be it so. Is fanaticism a justification of this summary justice? What more common than this fever in our churches? How does it infect whole sects! What more common in our political meetings? Must the walls within which fanatics meet be purged by desolating fire? Will not then the whole land be lighted by the flames? Shall I be told, that the fanaticism of the Abolitionists is of peculiar atrocity? that they are marked, set apart, by the monstrosity of their doctrines? These doctrines are, the brotherhood of the human race, and the right of every human being to his own person and to the protection of equal laws. Such are the heresies, that must be burned out with fire, and buried under the ruins of the temple where they are preached! Undoubtedly there may be crimes, so unnatural, so terrible to a community, that a people may be forgiven, if, deeming the usual forms of justice too slow, they assume the perilous office of inflicting speedy punishment. But that the processes of law, that the chartered rights of a free people should be set aside, to punish men, who come together to protest against the greatest wrong in the land, and whose fanaticism consists in the excess of their zeal for the oppressed; this is a doctrine, which puts to shame the dark ages, and which cannot long keep its ground in our own.

But this general charge of fanaticism is not the main defence of this hall-burning. The old cry of "danger to the Union" is set up. Abolitionism was to be committed to the flames, because it threatened to separate the States. I

shall not of course repeat what I have already said on this topic, but I will only ask, what will be the effect of burning up every edifice, which gives shelter to the supposed enemies of the Union? At this very moment, one of these twenty-six States has virtually assumed the right of war, which the Constitution confers on the General Government, and would inevitably drive us into hostilities with one of the most powerful nations of Europe, if the insanity of the contest did not make it next to impossible; and, in so doing, it has given a precedent, more menacing to the Union than any thing in our history, with the single exception of the Nullification or States-Rights movement. And shall all, who favor this usurpation, be forbidden to meet but at the peril of mobs and flames? In this case, might not some halls of legislation meet the fate of the Hall of Freedom? I must protest against the disposition to make the crime of endangering the Union a sufficient cause for house-burning. The nerves of our people are particularly sensitive on this point, and Incendiarism will become the fashion, if this plea will suffice for it. Every householder should lift up his voice against the dangerous doctrine.

But we have not yet touched the great cause of the conflagration of the Hall of Freedom. Something worse than fanaticism or separation of the Union, was the impulse to this violence. We are told, that white people and black people sat together on the benches of the Hall, and were even seen walking together in the streets! This was the unheard of atrocity which the virtues of the people of Philadelphia could not endure. They might have borne the dissolution of the national tie; but this junction of black and white was too much for human patience to sustain. And has it indeed come to this? For such a cause, are mobs and fires to be let loose on our persons and most costly buildings? What! Has not an American citizen a right to sit and walk with whom he will? Is this common privilege of humanity denied us? Is society authorized to choose our

associates ? Must our neighbour's tastes as to friendship and companionship control our own ? Have the feudal times come back to us, when to break the law of caste was a greater crime than to violate the laws of God ? What must Europe have thought, when the news crossed the ocean of the burning of the Hall of Freedom, because white and colored people walked together in the streets ? Europe might well open its eyes in wonder. On that continent, with all its aristocracy, the colored man mixes freely with his fellow-creatures. He passes for a man. He sometimes receives the countenance of the rich, and has even found his way into the palaces of the great. In Europe, the doctrine would be thought too absurd for refutation, that a colored man, of pure morals and piety, of cultivated intellect and refined manners, was not a fit companion for the best in the land. What must Europe have said, when brought to understand, that in a republic, founded on the principles of human rights and equality, people are placed beyond the protection of the laws, for treating an African as a man. This Philadelphia doctrine deserves no mercy. What an insult is thrown on human nature, in making it a heinous crime to sit or walk with a human being, whoever he may be !

It just occurs to me, that I have forgotten the circumstance, which filled to overflowing the cup of Abolitionist wickedness in Philadelphia. The great offence was this, that certain young women of anti-slavery faith, were seen to walk the streets with colored young men ! Of the truth of this allegation, which has been denied, I am not able to judge ; but allowing its correctness, I must think, that to violate the majesty of the laws, and to convulse a whole city, because a few young women thought fit to manifest in this way their benevolence towards a despised race,

“ Resembles ocean into tempest wrought  
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly.”

Offences against manners are wisely left to the scourge of public opinion, which proves itself, in such cases, a more effectual as well as more merciful discipline than burning or the gallows. If ridicule and indignation will not put down supposed misdemeanors of this class, what will force avail? — May I be here allowed to counsel my fair abolitionist friends, (if they have really fallen into the “unpardonable transgression” laid to their charge,) to respect hereafter the usages of society in regard to their communications with the other sex. If their anti-slavery zeal compels them to bear testimony against the prejudice, which excludes the colored people from the society of the whites, let them choose for their associates the women of the despised caste. With less defiance of opinion, they will thus give equal expression to their interest in the wronged. I believe, however, that the less conspicuous their zeal in this and other public movements, the better. There are none, for whom I feel a deeper and more affectionate solicitude, than for the young of the other sex; and when I think of their inexperience, and of the strength of their sensibility, and then consider how exposed they are, on occasions of struggle and excitement, to unconscious imprudences, which may throw a shade over their characters not soon to be dispelled, and which, in their calmer hours, may visit them with secret upbraidings, or with fears of having started from the proper path, I cannot but desire, that, whilst they open their hearts to all generous sympathies, they should postpone the public manifestation of their zeal to a riper age.

The violence, which was offered the Abolitionists for their reception of the colored people to freer social intercourse, was the more aggravated, because, if they erred in the matter, their motive was a generous one, not got up for the occasion, but proved to be sincere by their whole conduct. They say, that the colored race, ground as they have been in the dust by long tyranny, and still suffering

under prejudices which forbid their elevation, are entitled to peculiar regard from the disciples of him who came to raise the fallen, "to seek and save the lost." They look on this people with peculiar sympathy, because subjected to peculiar hardships. With this view, they are anxious to break down the distinction, or at least, to diminish the distance, between the black man and the white, believing that in this way only the degrading influences of the injuries of years can be overcome. Allow this to be an error; is it not a generous one? Is there nothing holy in sympathy with the wronged? Are feelings of benevolent concern, for whatever portion of our race, to be insulted, and to bring down violence on our heads, because they transgress conventional rules and the forms of "good society"? That ignorant and coarse people should treat the motives of the Abolitionists with scorn, cannot surprise us; but that any, who belong to what is called the respectable and refined class, should join the fierce multitude in persecuting men of worth and humanity, admits no excuse. Does it not show, that the line of separation between the high and low is not as broad as we sometimes imagine; that much which passes for refinement is mere gloss; and that when the passions are stirred up by the concurrence of numbers, "the friends of order" can set laws at defiance as boldly as the multitude?

This outrage, if viewed in its political aspects, deserves severe reprobation. Mob-law, in this country, ought always to be frowned down. It is an invasion of the fundamental principle of our institutions, of the sovereignty of the people, and the more dangerous, because it seems to the multitude to be an assertion of the principle which it overthrows. The sovereignty of the people has here but one mode of manifestation, and that is, the laws. It can express itself in no other way; and, consequently, a mob, in forcibly suspending the laws, and in substituting its own



will for that which the legitimate organs of the people have proclaimed, usurps, for a time, the sovereignty of the state, and is virtually in rebellion. In a despotism, the laws are of less moment than in a free country, because in the former there is a force above the laws, an irresistible will, which has at its disposal a subservient soldiery and summary punishments, to maintain something like order in the state. But in a republic, there is nothing higher than the laws ; and, in shaking the authority of these, the whole social edifice is shaken. Reverence for the laws, is the essential spirit, the guardian power, of a free state. Take this away, and no physical force can take its place. The force is in the excited multitude, and, in proportion as it is roused against law, it prepares the way, and constitutes a demand for a more regular, despotic power, which, bad as it is, is better than the tyranny of crowds. There is, indeed, as I have intimated, one case where popular commotion does, comparatively, little harm. I mean, that which is excited by some daring crime, which the laws sternly forbid, and which sends an electric thrill of horror through a virtuous community. In such a case, the public without law do the work of law, and enforce those natural, eternal principles of right, on which all legislation should rest. Even this violence, however, is dangerous. But, be it ever so blameless, who can bring under this head the outrage offered to Abolitionists, men who had broken no law, and whose distinction was, that they had planted themselves on the grounds of natural and everlasting right ?

This outrage against the Abolitionists made little impression on the country at large. It was pronounced wrong, of course ; but, then, we were told, that the Abolitionists were so imprudent, so fierce, so given to denunciation, so intolerant towards all who differ from them, that they had no great claim to sympathy. Everywhere the excesses of the Abolitionists are used to palliate the persecution

which they suffer. But are they the only intolerant people in the country? Is there a single political party, which does not deal as freely in denunciation? Is there a religious sect, which has not its measure of bitterness? I ask, as before, if fierce denunciation is to be visited with flames, where will the conflagration stop?

In thus speaking, let me not be considered as blind to the errors of the Abolitionists. My interest in their object increases my pain at their defects. When I consider them as having espoused a just and holy cause, I am peculiarly grieved by the appearances of passionate severity, in their writing, speeches, and movements. Such men ought to find in the grandeur, purity, and benevolence of their end, irresistible motives to self-control, to a spirit of equity and mildness, to a calm, lofty trust in God. I grieve, that, in an age, when the power of Gentleness and Meekness is beginning to be understood, they have sought strength in very different weapons. I do not deny their error; but, I say, let there be some proportion between the punishment and the offence. Is nothing to be pardoned to men, who have meditated on great wrongs, until their spirits are deeply stirred? Is vehemence, in such men, the unpardonable sin? Must we rigidly insist, that they shall weigh every word before they speak? When all England was on fire with the injuries of the slave, is it wonderful, that men in this country, where the evil is most towering, should echo in louder tones the cry which came to them over the ocean? Is it wonderful, that women, thinking of more than a million of their own sex, at no great distance, exposed to degradation and prostitution, should, in their grief and indignation, repel every extenuating plea for the supporters of these abominations? Was it possible, that none should speak on this subject, but the wise and prudent? Does not every great cause gather round itself vehement spirits? Must no evil be touched till we have assurance,

that it shall be shaken and subverted by rule ? We bear extravagance and vehemence elsewhere, without burning down men's houses. Why this singular sensitiveness to anti-slavery vehemence, except it be, that slavery, which so many call an evil with the lips, has never come as an evil to their consciences and hearts ?

But, it is said, the Abolitionists injure a good cause. Be it so. I think they have done it harm as well as good. But is not this the common course of human affairs ? What good cause is not harmed, and sometimes thrown back, by its best friends. In the present imperfect state of our nature, men seldom take a strong hold on any great object, without falling into excess. Enthusiasm, by which I mean a disproportionate strength of feeling and emotion, such as interferes more or less with the judgment, seems almost inseparable from earnestness. The calm reason, the single idea of Right, the principle of pure love, such as it exists in God, serene and unimpassioned, — these divine impulses seldom of themselves carry men through great enterprises. Human passionateness mixes with higher influences. This is to be lamented, and much evil is done ; but we must endure enthusiasm with its excesses, or sink into a lifeless monotony. These excesses we ought to rebuke and discourage ; but we must not hunt them down as the greatest crimes. We must take heed, lest in our war against rashness, we quench all the generous sentiments of human nature. It is natural to desire, that evils should be removed gently, imperceptibly, without agitation ; and the more of this quiet process, the better. But it is not ordinarily by such processes, that the mysterious providence of God purifies society. Religion and freedom have made their way through struggles and storms. Established evils naturally oppose an iron front to reform ; and the spirit of reform, gathering new vehemence from oppositions, pours itself forth in passionate efforts. Man is not

good enough yet to join invincible courage, zeal, and struggle, with all-suffering meekness. But must conflict with evil cease, because it will be marred with human imperfection? Must the burning spirit lock up its sympathies with suffering humanity, because not sure of being always self-possessed? Do we forgive nothing to the warm-hearted? Should we not labor to temper and guide aright excessive zeal in a virtuous cause, instead of persecuting it as the worst of crimes?

The Abolitionists deserve rebuke; but let it be proportioned to the offence. They do wrong in their angry denunciation of slaveholders. But is calling the slaveholder hard names a crime of unparalleled aggravation? Is it not, at least, as great a crime to spoil a man of his rights and liberty, to make him a chattel, and trample him in the dust? And why shall the latter offender escape with so much gentler rebuke? I know, as well as the slaveholder, what it is to bear the burden of hard names. The South has not been sparing of its invectives in return for my poor efforts against slavery. I understand the evil of reproach; and I am compelled to pronounce it a very slight one, and not to be named, in comparison with bondage; and why is it, that he who inflicts the former should be called to drink the cup of wrath to the very dregs, whilst he who inflicts the latter receives hardly a mild rebuke?

I say these things not as a partisan of the Abolitionists, but from a love of justice. They seem to me greatly wronged by the unparalleled persecution to which they have been exposed; and the wronged should never want a defender. But I am not of them. In the spirit of many of them I see much to condemn. I utterly disapprove their sweeping denunciations. I fear that their scorn of expediency may degenerate into recklessness. I fear, that, as a natural if not necessary consequence of their multiplied meetings held chiefly for excitement, their zeal must often be forced,

got up for effect, a product of calculation, not a swell of the heart. I confide in them the less, the more they increase. I fear, that their resort to political action will impair their singleness of purpose and their moral power. I distrust the system of association and agitation in a cause like this. But, because I see among them somewhat to fear and blame, must I shut my eyes on more which I ought to commend? Must not men of pure and lofty aims be honored, because, like every thing human, they are not free from fault? I respect the Abolitionists for maintaining great principles with courage and fervor, amidst scorn and violence. Can men have a higher claim to respect? In their body, amidst prejudiced, narrow-minded, conceited, self-seeking members, such as are found in all associations, there is a large proportion of uncompromising, singlehearted friends of truth, right, and freedom; and such men are securities against the adoption of criminal ends or criminal means. In their front rank, perhaps at their head, is Gerrit Smith; a man worthy of all honor for his overflowing munificence, for his calm yet invincible moral courage, for his Christian liberality embracing men of every sect and name, and for his deep, active, inexhaustible sympathy with the sinful, suffering, and oppressed. In their ranks may also be found our common friend, Charles Follen, that genuine man, that heroic spirit, whose love of freedom unites, in rare harmony, the old Roman force with Christian love, in whom we see the generous, rash enthusiasm of his youth, tempered by time and trial into a most sweet and winning virtue. I could name others, honored and dear. I do not, for the sake of such, shut my eyes on the defects of the association; but that it should be selected for outrage and persecution is a monstrous wrong, against which solemn testimony ought to be borne.

There is one consolation attending persecution. It often exalts the spirit of the sufferer, and often covers with honor



those whom it had destined to shame. Who made Socrates the most venerable name of antiquity? The men who mixed for him the cup of hemlock, and drove him as a criminal from the world which he had enlightened. Providence teaches us the doctrine of retribution very touchingly in the fact, that future ages guard with peculiar reverence the memories of men, who, in their own times, were condemned, abhorred, hunted like wild beasts, and destroyed by fire or sword, for their fidelity to truth. That the Abolitionists have grown strong under outrage, we know; and in this I should rejoice, were their cause ever so bad; because persecution must be worse, and its defeat must be a good. I wish that persecution, if not checked by principle, may be stayed, by seeing that it fights against itself, and builds up those whom it toils to destroy. How long the Abolitionists will be remembered, I know not; but, as long as they live in history, they will wear as a crown the sufferings which they have so firmly borne. Posterity will be just to them; nor can I doubt, what doom posterity will pronounce on the mobs or single men, who have labored to silence them by brutal force. I should be glad to see them exchanging their array of affiliated societies for less conspicuous and artificial means of action. But let them not do this from subserviency to opinion, or in opposition to their sense of right. Let them yield nothing to fear. Let them never be false to that great cause, which they have fought for so manfully, Freedom of Speech. Let them never give countenance to the doctrine, which all tyrants hold, that material power, physical pain, is mightier than the convictions of Reason, than the principle of Duty, than the Love of God and mankind. Sooner may they pine and perish in prisons, sooner bleed or be strangled by the executioner, than surrender their deliberate principles to lawless violence.

In the remarks now made on the recent outrage at

Philadelphia, I have felt myself bound to use great plainness of speech. Had I consulted my feelings, I should have been silent. In that city I have old and dear friends, and have received hospitalities, which I remember with gratitude. But we are not allowed to "confer with flesh and blood." I beg however to say, in order to prevent misinterpretation, that I have not thought, for a moment, of holding up Philadelphia as the worst of cities. I do not infer from a single tumult, the character of a vast population. How many thousands of that metropolis took no part in the transaction under consideration. And of those who gave it their active or passive sanction, how many thousands were hurried on by imitation and sympathy, were swept away by a common impulse, without comprehending the import of the deed. In a popular ferment, individuals lay aside themselves for a time, and do what they would shrink from, if left to act on their separate responsibility. In all cities, it is true of the vast majority of men, that their consciences cannot stand alone. Their principles, as they call them, are echoes of general sentiment. Their sense of duty, unpropped by opinion, totters, and too often falls. One of the saddest views of society is, the almost universal want of self-determined, self-subsistent virtue. It is therefore no sign of unparalleled depravity, that a community proves false to great principles in seasons of excitement. All great cities abound in ignorance, prejudice, passion, selfish conformity to the world, and moral corruption in its grosser and more refined forms; and that these bitter fountains should sometimes burst forth, is a matter of course. I ascribe to no city precedence in virtue or crime. I would only say, that Philadelphia has placed herself, more conspicuously than other cities, on a bad eminence, and she must hold it, until buildings devoted to Liberty of Speech can stand unharmed on her soil.

I now finish this long letter. Your patience, my dear

Sir, has not, I trust, been exhausted. Whether this communication will answer the public ends which I have proposed, I know not ; but it will do one good of a personal nature. It will be a memorial, however brief, of a friendship, which began in our youth, and which has withstood the vicissitudes of so many years, that we may expect it to go down with us to our graves. It pleases me, that our names should be associated in a work, which, though written in haste, and for a temporary exigency, yet reflects something of both our minds. It is fit, that the thoughts, unfolded in this letter, should be addressed to one, with whom I have conversed long and familiarly on the great interests of human nature. I owe you much for the light and strength you have given me, and especially for the faith and hope, which, under much personal suffering and depression, you have cherished and expressed in regard to the destinies of our race. We have given much of our sympathy to the multitude. We have felt more for the many who are forgotten, than for the few who shine ; and our great inquiry has been, how the mass of men may be raised from ignorance and sensuality, to a higher social, intellectual, moral, and religious life. We have rejoiced together in the progress already made by individuals and communities ; but a voice has come to us from the depths of human suffering, from the abuses of the social state, from the teachings of Jesus Christ, urging the need of new struggle with giant evils, and of new efforts for the diffusion of comforts, refinements, quickening truths, enlightened piety, and disinterested virtue. A few years will bring us to our journey's end. To the last, I trust, we shall speak words of blessing to our race, and words of encouragement to all who toil and suffer for its good. Through God's grace, we hope for another life ; but that life, we believe, will, in some respects, be one with this. Our deep sympathies with the great human family, will, we believe, survive the grave.

We shall then rejoice in the interpretation of the dark mysteries of the present state, of the woes and oppressions now so rife on earth. May it not be hoped, that, instead of our present poor and broken labors, we shall then render services to our brethren, worthy of that nobler life? But the future will reveal its own secrets. It is enough to know, that this human world, of which we form a portion, lives, suffers, and is moving onward, under the eye and care of the Infinite Father. Before His pure, omnipotent goodness, all oppressions must fall ; and, under His reign, our highest aspirations, prayers, and hopes for suffering humanity, must, sooner or later, receive an accomplishment, beyond the power of prophecy to utter, or of thought to comprehend.

## NOTES.

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### Note A, page 17.

As the page here referred to was passing through the press, I understood, that it was maintained by some, that the treatment, which Abolition petitions had received from Congress, was not so peculiar as I had supposed; and I state this, that the reader may inquire for himself. For one, I feel little disposition to inquire. It is very possible, that, in this world of tyranny and usurpation, scattered precedents may be found, which, if used for interpreting and defining our rights, would reduce them all to insignificance. A man, jealous of his rights, will not yield them to this, or any other kind of logic. We have here the case of a great number of petitions, from all parts of the free States, and from citizens of intelligence and blameless character, which, before being presented, were denied, by a resolution of Congress, the usual notice and consideration. It was not the case of a single petition, coming from a half insane man, from an eccentric schemer, bearing on its face the marks of mental aberration, or asking for something palpably absurd and unconstitutional. The petitions of the Abolitionists greatly exceeded in number all the other petitions to Congress taken together. They represented large masses of citizens, who prayed for what is pronounced constitutional by our wisest men. And Congress resolved, before these petitions were offered, that, on being presented, they should be laid on the table without debate, and that no member should have the privilege of saying a word in their behalf, or of calling them up for consideration or for any action in relation to them at a future time. Has any thing like this ever occurred before? Or if it has, shall we go to such precedents for an interpretation of the right of petition? Is it not plain, that, after this measure, party-spirit can never want pretexts for rejecting any and all petitions, be they what they may? To say, that because these petitions passed through the form of being laid on the table, the right was not touched, strikes me as one of those evasions, which



will do for a court of law, but which it is an insult to present to a great nation. Suppose that Congress, at the beginning of a session, should ordain, that an aperture of certain dimensions should be made on the clerk's table and be connected by a tube with the cellar or common sewer; and should then ordain, that by far the greater number of petitions, to be presented during the session, should be committed to the part of the table occupied by the opening, so as to sink immediately and be never heard of more. What man of common sense, who knows the difference between words and things, or what freeman, who cares a rush for his rights, would not say, that the right of petition had been virtually annulled? Why not openly reject the petitions, without this mockery? Do we not know, that it is from side-blows that liberty has most to fear? It is very possible, that legal subtilty may find precedents for the course pursued by Congress, just as it may find authorities to prove that we have no right to our own persons, but may be sold as chattels. But such reasonings to a freeman carry their answer on their own front. Human rights are too sacred, too substantial, to be refined and attenuated into shadows by ingenious comparison of precedents and authorities. I take the ground, that the right of petition is *something*, and of course that there is a fatal fallacy in the reasoning which would reduce it to *nothing*. I would recommend to my readers a "Letter of the Honorable Caleb Cushing to the people of Massachusetts," in which this subject is discussed with great clearness and ability. It should be circulated as a tract. The public are also much indebted to the Honorable J. Q. Adams, for his unshrinking energy in maintaining the right of petition.

I say this from no particular interest in the present case. I doubt, whether the agitation of slavery in Congress is to do good to the country or to the cause of Emancipation; whether Abolition petitions bring the subject before the people, either at the North or South, in the manner most likely to produce conviction. I look at the matter without reference to present parties. One of the sacred rights of the people has been touched, and this should never be done without expressions of jealousy and reprobation. The strongest political influence in this country is party-spirit; a selfish, unrighteous, unscrupulous spirit, impatient of restraint, and always ready to sacrifice the provisions of the Constitution to

present purposes and immediate triumph. One of the most solemn duties of patriotism is to guard our rights from the touch of this harpy. No precedents of encroachment must be yielded to party-spirit, for it will push them to extremes. No bulwarks, which our fathers have erected round our liberties, must be surrendered. The dangers of liberty are always great from human passions and selfishness; great under the freest institutions, and sometimes greater from what is called the popular party than from any other; and for this plain reason, that this party has formed the bad habit of calling itself "the people," and easily deludes itself into the belief, that, being "the people," it may take great freedoms with the Constitution, and use its power with little restraint. This delusion is what constitutes the danger to liberty from mobs; mobs call themselves "the people."

#### Note to page 26.

I have allowed on this page, that slavery wears a milder aspect at the South than in other countries. I ought to inform my readers, that this is denied by some, who have inquired into the matter. A pamphlet or larger volume is announced at New York, in which the subject of the *treatment* of slaves at the South is to be particularly considered. The work is said to be the result of patient inquiries, and full proofs of its statements are promised. Those at the North, who believe in the mildness of Southern Slavery, will do well to examine the publication.